

## **Stratified Roman Pottery from Blue Bridge Lane, York**

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The assessment of the Roman pottery from the FAS excavations at Blue Bridge Lane, York, argued that the large quantity of small, abraded sherds found in deposits of post-Roman date added little to the site history, except to show that some of this pottery is contemporary with that found in stratified deposits on the site whilst other sherds are of types which do not occur in those deposits, indicating that some activity probably took place on the site in the later Roman period (probably into the later 4<sup>th</sup> century, since sherds of calcite-tempered ware were present).

This report, therefore, concentrates on the few stratified assemblages of Roman pottery found. The report is divided into two sections. In the first, the pottery is described and summarised by ware, and form, where possibly using Monaghan's corpus (1993). In the second section, the assemblages are described feature by feature. Finally, a reconstruction is attempted of pottery use and deposition on the Blue Bridge Lane site. It is suggested here that there is possible evidence for manuring (and therefore agriculture) in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century, pre c.120. A single cremation burial, datable to the mid 2<sup>nd</sup> to early 3<sup>rd</sup> century, followed by a change in site use in the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century, during which several ditches and other features were backfilled. Later Roman activity is only represented by residual potsherds but again indicates agricultural manuring (although of course this later Roman pottery could have been brought onto the site in the post-Roman period).

The Roman pottery from the neighbouring site of Fishergate House is mainly of similar date to that from this site, but is almost entirely derived from cremations, either intact or disturbed and redeposited in Anglo-Saxon or later contexts. These all pre-date the one Blue Bridge Lane cremation, suggesting that burials started to the south of the site and spread northwards. There is no evidence there for the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century change of land use but that site too includes a small scatter of residual later Roman sherds.

### **Wares**

Table 1 lists the various wares identified in the stratified Roman pottery collection from Blue Bridge Lane, together with a single sherd, a handmade "Native" ware, found only in a residual context. All of these wares are described in detail in Monaghan 1993 although the two almond rimmed amphora sherds in Campanian black sand fabric cannot be assigned to a YAT code, since they are a type which was only recognised after the publication of 1986, which was used as the basis of the YAT amphora classification.

*Table 1*

Broad cname	broad source	Narrow cname	source area	YAT code1	NoSH	Wt
AMPH	Imported	Amphorae	imported	AA	2	132
AMPH	Imported	Amphorae	Western Mediterranean	AP25	27	854
AMPH	Imported	Amphorae	Western Mediterranean	AP27	2	15
BURNISHED	Regional industries	BB1	Dorset	B1	12	83
BURNISHED	Local	Grey B.	Yorkshire	B3	84	1484
BURNISHED	Regional industries	BB2	South Yorkshire	B7	13	163
BURNISHED	Regional industries	Crambeck	Crambeck	B11	5	47
COLOUR-COATED	Regional industries	NVCC	Lower Nene	C1	6	13
COLOUR-COATED	Imported	CCW	imported	C12	2	1
COLOUR-COATED	York	CCW	York	C18	2	5
COLOUR-COATED	Imported	CCW	Rhineland	C27	1	4
EBOR	York	Ebor	York	E1	188	1394
GREY	Unknown British?	Fine Grey	Unknown British?	F1	4	19
GREY	York	Grey	York	G1	59	631
SHELLY	Regional industries	Dales	Lincolnshire	H1	13	96
MORTARIA	York	Mortaria	York	M3	1	22
MORTARIA	York	Mortaria	York	M4	1	40
MORTARIA	Regional industries	Mortaria	Mancetter	M14?	2	57
MORTARIA	Regional industries	Mortaria	Mancetter	M14	2	57
MORTARIA	Regional industries	Mortaria	Verulamium region	M15	23	841
NATIVE	Unknown British?	Native	Unknown British?	N1	1	19
OXID	Unknown British?	Misc. oxid	Unknown British?	O0	1	1
RUSTIC	York?	Rustic	York?	R2	6	54
SAMIAN	Imported	SGS	South Gaul	S1	28	97

Broad cname	broad source	Narrow cname	source area	YAT code1	NoSH	Wt
SAMIAN	Imported	CGS	Central Gaul	S2	6	7

It should be noted that several wares are actually defined by their surface treatment and actually have similar or identical fabrics, these include E1, B3, G1 and R2. The 34 sherds of Samian ware are mostly spalled fragments which makes identification of their form problematic and without this it is difficult to assign any of the sherds to a specific source (they are likely to include vessels from La Graufesenque, Montans, Las Martres-de-Veyres and Lezoux).

## Forms

Table 2 shows the identified forms present in the stratified Roman pottery collection. The collection is too small for detailed comparison with other sites, in York or elsewhere. The only points of note are that the number of sherds for certain vessel types is well in excess of the number of vessels represented, due to the presence not only of a deliberately buried jar, from cremation F394, but also the presence of smashed vessels in several other deposits. The forms affected are mortaria, flanged bowls and, in particular, head pots, where all of the sherds found might come from one or two vessels.

*Table 2*

Code	Name	NoSH	NoV	Wt
UNID	Unidentifiable	32	32	87
AMPH	Amphora	32	25	1046
BEAK	Beaker	8	6	21
BOWL	Bowl	8	8	195
BOWL/DISH	Bowl or dish	1	1	6
BOWL/PLATTER	Bowl or platter	1	1	10
CLSD	Unidentified closed form	61	60	331
DISH	Dish	7	7	59
DR38	Samian Dr38 bowl	1	1	4
FB	Flanged bowl	14	3	145
FLAG	Flagon	16	16	110
FLAG/JAR	Flagon or jar	52	52	299
HEAD POT	Head pot	42	2	216
JAR	Jar	181	114	2442
LID	Lid	4	3	84
MORT	Mortaria	30	8	1101

Code	Name	NoSH	NoV	Wt
PIE DISH	Pie dish	2	2	25
PLATTER	Platter	7	6	123

### Assemblages

The following contexts produced small, abraded groups of Roman pottery and no later sherds but were considered to be probably residual in Anglo-Saxon or later features:

1602, 1789, 1280, 1458, 1474, 1535, 1511, 1637, 1803, 1816, 1863, 1906, 1911, 1961, 2072, 2138, 2217 and 2229. All contained sherds of Ebor 1 or others of likely later 1<sup>st</sup> century or later date apart from context 2229 which produced a sherd of late 3<sup>rd</sup> century or later date.

Similarly small, probably residual assemblages were recovered from contexts 1089, 1233, 1305, 1479, 1704, 1895, 2118, 2143, and 2199. Again, most of these produced sherds of Ebor 1 or wares of similar date and the size of the sherds suggests that they are residual. However, in some cases the stratigraphic context suggested a possible early date and the sherds were therefore recorded fully.

The remaining contexts all produced two or three sherds of Roman pottery, and where later pottery was also present it has been interpreted as being intrusive.

### Buried soil 2040

A small group of Roman sherds, together with one Anglo-Scandinavian sherd. The group contains a reeded rim bowl of late 1<sup>st</sup>/early 2<sup>nd</sup> century date (G1) and a sherd of Central Gaulish Samian ware (S2), probably dating to the period after c.120 (Table 1).

*Table 3*

cname	Sum of Nosh	Sum of Weight	Average of Mean wt
YORKA	1.00	3.00	3.00
E1	1.00	25.00	25.00
G1	1.00	9.00	9.00
S2	1.00	1.00	1.00

### Layer 2205

The pottery from layer 2205 consists of moderate-sized sherds with no obvious abrasion (Table 2). However, all the sherds appear to be from different vessels and the material therefore is probably a secondary rubbish deposit (moved from its initial place of disposal). There are no sherds present which could only date to the later 1<sup>st</sup> century and it is therefore likely that the assemblage does not contain any pottery earlier than c.100AD. There are a

handful of later 2<sup>nd</sup>-century sherds (a greyware pie dish rim, a featureless sherd of Dorset BB1, two sherds of Central Gaulish samian and a body sherd from a Nene Valley colour-coated beaker) but in general the assemblage appears to pre-date the widespread use of BB1 and its copies. No definitely 3<sup>rd</sup>- or 4<sup>th</sup>-century material is present. The range of forms represented (excluding the later sherds listed above) includes jars, flagons and platters, all types present in the late 1<sup>st</sup>/early 2<sup>nd</sup>-century cremations on this site and Fishergate House, to its south as well as a Mancetter-Hartshill mortarium and South Gaulish samian sherds, mostly spalled into unidentifiable pieces, but including a sherd from a decorated bowl with a rivet hole.

**Table 4**

cname	Sum of Nosh	Sum of Weight	Average of Mean wt
E1	51.00	376.00	15.23
B1	1.00	19.00	19.00
C1	1.00	3.00	3.00
G1	15.00	140.00	11.28
M14	1.00	38.00	38.00
R2	4.00	36.00	9.00
S1	13.00	28.00	3.40
S2	3.00	4.00	1.33
M4	1.00	40.00	40.00

**Layer 2211**

A small assemblage of late 1<sup>st</sup> to early 2<sup>nd</sup>-century pottery, including large, relatively-fresh sherds (Table 3).

**Table 5**

cname	Sum of Nosh	Sum of Weight	Average of Mean wt
E1	6.00	72.00	15.67
G1	4.00	79.00	37.17
S1	2.00	14.00	7.00

**Ploughsoil 2133**

Sixteen very small abraded sherds of Roman pottery were recovered from the ploughsoil, 2133 (Table 4). A small sherd of Central Gaulish Samian ware and a local burnished 'pie dish' of c.120 or later are the latest datable pieces in the group.

**Table 6**

cname	Sum of Nosh	Sum of Weight	Average of Mean wt
E1	9.00	19.00	2.14

B3	1.00	10.00	10.00
G1	4.00	7.00	1.75
S1	1.00	1.00	1.00
S2	1.00	1.00	1.00

### Backfill of Roadside Ditch F43

One hundred and seventy-six sherds of Roman pottery were recovered from the backfill of the roadside ditch, context 1163 (Table 5). The assemblage seems to mostly consist of later 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup>-century wares but with some early 3<sup>rd</sup>-century material (Monaghan's Ceramic Period 3a), namely, a Mid Roman Campanian amphora with an almond-shaped rim (Williams in 1993, 973) and sherds of Dales Shelly ware jars (H1).

*Table 7*

cname	Sum of Nosh	Sum of Weight	Average of Mean wt
E1	42.00	368.00	15.68
A0	2.00	132.00	66.00
AP25	25.00	620.00	50.54
AP27-30	2.00	15.00	7.50
B1	11.00	64.00	5.63
B11	5.00	47.00	7.00
B3	27.00	151.00	5.46
B7	1.00	13.00	13.00
C1	3.00	2.00	0.67
C12	2.00	1.00	0.50
C27	1.00	4.00	4.00
F1	4.00	19.00	4.75
G1	26.00	178.00	7.11
H1	13.00	96.00	7.38
M14	1.00	19.00	19.00
O0	1.00	1.00	1.00
R2	2.00	18.00	9.00
S1	7.00	26.00	2.94
S2	1.00	1.00	1.00

### Ditch F110

Five sherds of Roman pottery and one medieval (late 12<sup>th</sup> century and interpreted as intrusive) came from ditch F110 (Table 6). A later 1<sup>st</sup> to early 2<sup>nd</sup>-century date is likely.

*Table 8*

Context	cname	Sum of Nosh	Sum of Weight	Average of Mean wt
1258	E1	3.00	10.00	3.33
1921	AP25	1.00	91.00	91.00
"	G1	1.00	64.00	64.00
2088	YORK	1.00	9.00	9.00

**Ditch F203**

Five sherds of Roman pottery and one sherd of Northern Maxey-type ware were recovered from the backfill of ditch F203 (Table 7). A late 1<sup>st</sup> to early 2<sup>nd</sup>-century date is likely for the Roman sherds.

*Table 9*

cname	Sum of Nosh	Sum of Weight	Average of Mean wt
MAX	1.00	6.00	6.00
E1	4.00	41.00	10.25
AP25	1.00	143.00	143.00

**Ditch F389**

Sixty-five sherds of Roman pottery were recovered from the backfill of ditch 389 (context 1782, Table 8). The assemblage consists of two components. The first is of late 1<sup>st</sup> to early 2<sup>nd</sup>-century date and consists of vessels represented by single, relatively small sherds whilst the second consists of smashed vessels, such as a South Yorkshire burnished greyware flanged bowl (B7), sherds from a handled jug in red-slipped Ebor 1 ware (E1) and sherds forming the complete profile of a mortarium with a collared rim. The form of this vessel is typical of vessels produced in Colchester and in Gaul but the fabric is more similar to Verulamium Region Whiteware. The trituration grits include some well-rounded water polished grains derived from lower Cretaceous or later strata (M15). Sherds from jars with acute burnished lattice decoration are present (B3). The flanged bowl is a later 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup>-century form whereas the remaining smashed vessels are probably of early 3<sup>rd</sup> century date. If all three vessels represent a single period deposit then it probably dates to the early to mid 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

*Table 10*

cname	Sum of Nosh	Sum of Weight	Average of Mean wt
B3	7.00	99.00	14.14
B7	12.00	150.00	10.00
C1	2.00	8.00	4.00
C3	1.00	1.00	1.00

E1	15.00	165.00	14.84
G1	1.00	49.00	49.00
M15	23.00	841.00	36.57
S1	4.00	12.00	3.00

### Scoop F392

Six sherds of Roman pottery were recovered from the backfill of scoop F392 (Table 9). They include four sherds from a head pot, other sherds of which come from the backfill of ditch F438. Two greyware jar sherds with acute burnished lattice were also found (B3). Monaghan suggests that head pots were a short-lived production of the Eboracum ware industry in the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century (CP3a).

*Table 11*

cname	Sum of Nosh	Sum of Weight	Average of Mean wt
E1	4.00	22.00	5.50
B3	2.00	9.00	4.50

### Cremation F394

A near-complete greyware jar with acute lattice burnished decoration was recovered from this cremation (Table 10). In addition, sherds of a white-slipped Ebor 1 ware flagon and a possible local roughcast beaker were present (C18). These are presumed to be residual and included in the backfill of the feature rather than evidence for the presence of further accompanying vessels. The decoration on the jar dates it to the early 2<sup>nd</sup> to early 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries.

*Table 12*

cname	Sum of Nosh	Sum of Weight	Average of Mean wt
E1	1.00	17.00	17.00
B3	48.00	1,221.00	25.44
C18	2.00	5.00	2.50

### Ditch F438

Thirty-eight sherds of Roman pottery were recovered from the backfill of ditch F438 (Table 11). Most of these sherds come from a single head pot, other sherds from which were found in scoop F392. They provide an early 3<sup>rd</sup> century or later date for the ditch backfill.

*Table 13*

cname	Sum of Nosh	Sum of Weight	Average of Mean wt
E1	36.00	167.00	4.80
G1	2.00	9.00	4.50



**Scoop F439**

Two sherds of Roman pottery were recovered from the backfill of scoop F439 (Table 12). They include one sherd from a head pot, not necessarily the same vessel as found in scoop F392 and ditch F438 but even if not, presumably of similar, early 3<sup>rd</sup>-century date.

*Table 14*

cname	Sum of Nosh	Sum of Weight	Average of Mean wt
E1	1.00	1.00	1.00
G1	1.00	20.00	20.00

**Ditch F519**

A single sherd of Roman pottery, weighing 1 gm, was recovered from the backfill of ditch F519, a red-slipped Ebor 1 ware closed vessel, of later 1<sup>st</sup> century or later date.

**Ditch F537**

Context 2159 produced a small assemblage of late 1<sup>st</sup> to early 2<sup>nd</sup>-century sherds, including a local greyware lid.

Context 2160 produced a small assemblage, the latest sherd in which was a greyware jar bodysherd with burnished acute lattice decoration, datable to c.120AD or later.

Context 2158, secondary ploughsoil, produced sherds of a local mortarium and a South Gaulish Samian ware vessel.

*Table 15*

Context	cname	Sum of Nosh	Sum of Weight	Average of Mean wt
2159	E1	2.00	12.00	6.00
"	G1	1.00	53.00	53.00
2160	E1	4.00	17.00	4.25
"	B3	1.00	3.00	3.00
2158	S1	1.00	16.00	16.00
"	M3	1.00	22.00	22.00

**Roman pottery use and deposition at Blue Bridge Lane**

In most cases the stratified Roman pottery from Blue Bridge Lane merely gives a terminus post quem for the backfilling of the feature in which the sherds were found. The exceptions are the cremation, F394, which must be later than c.120 and earlier than c.225, when obtuse lattice decoration replaced the earlier style and the various features which contain groups of sherds from smashed vessels, including one or more head pots. These all appear to date to the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century and suggest that there was a change in site layout at this time, as a

result of which a number of ditches and other features, which might have been present from a much earlier period, were backfilled.

There was clearly activity on the site in the period before 120, and much of the pottery found probably dates to that early 2<sup>nd</sup> century period (Monaghan's CP2a). Particularly distinctive type fossils of this phase are rusticated jars (R2) which were rapidly replaced by vessels with burnished lattice decoration in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century. However, few sealed deposits of this date were found and most of the sherds of these types are small and represent different vessels. This suggests that this early Roman activity might have been agricultural, involving the spreading of rubbish onto fields as manure. Although contemporary with the cremation burials found at Fishergate House, to the south, there is no concentration of vessel types (flagons and greyware jars some of which are rusticated) which might have held cremations, or (in the case of lids) been buried alongside them, although these types are present.

There is no stratified pottery of later 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup>-century date and only a small quantity of pottery of this period was present in post-Roman deposits. Therefore, it is likely that the site went into decline in the period after the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century, or at any rate that its land use did not lead to the deposition of pottery.

## Bibliography

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