

Assessment of the Finds from Seaton Ross, East Yorkshire (OSA05 WB03)

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A watching brief at South End Road, Seaton Ross, East Yorkshire, undertaken by Duncan Stirk for On-Site Archaeology Ltd revealed evidence for medieval and later agriculture, in the form of a furrow, a field ditch and deposits of ploughsoil. The associated finds suggest that this activity may have started in the 12th to 13th centuries, probably starting in or before the mid 13th century, and continued into the post-medieval period. The finds, however, are less fragmentary and less abraded than those normally associated with agriculture and may point to the existence of occupation nearby.

Description

Ceramic Building Material

Six fragments of ceramic building material were recovered. None of these could be exactly paralleled with material from dated deposits in York and consequently identification and interpretation of the finds is only tentative.

Three fragments were recovered from context 1006. One of these has a similar fabric and appearance to the brick and tile produced in York in the Roman period.

A second fragment has a fine, calcareous texture and appears to be part of a pantile produced in a mould lined with fine-textured quartz sand. The appearance of this tile suggests at least a later 17th-century date, and probably later.

The third fragment is a brick which is made from fine-grained variegated red- and white-firing clays. Such clays occur widely in the Coal Measures of West and South Yorkshire.

A fragment recovered from context 1012 appears to come from a flat roof tile with a similar fabric to the brick from context 1006.

A fragment of tile from context 2002 is also similar to that from Roman York, but appears to be part of an unglazed floor tile, whose upper surface is worn (possibly sufficiently worn to have completely removed an original glaze).

Finally, a small abraded fragment from context 3002 is probably from a flat roof tile of medieval or early post-medieval date.

Iron

Tap slag

Fragments of tap slag, from the production of iron rather than the working of previously-smelted iron, were present in contexts 1007, 1012 and 2000.

Nail?

A possible nail shaft was recovered from context 2006. However, the object does not taper and appears to be of square cross section throughout. It might therefore be a bolt or a rod of unknown function.

Unknown object(s)

Two fragments of heavily corroded iron were recovered from context 2006. They might be iron strips of rectangular cross-section but would require X-radiography to test this suggestion.

Glass

A single fragment of light green bottle glass was recovered from context 2006. The vessel was mould blown and is probably of later 19th-century or later date.

Pottery

Roman?

A possible highly abraded fragment of Roman pottery was recovered from context 1006. However, the fabric is similar to that of some of the ceramic building material and it is possible that this is a sliver of brick or tile.

Medieval

Two fragments of York Gritty ware were recovered, from contexts 1004 and 3005. Both come from jars used for cooking. Such vessels were used in York from the later 11th to the mid 13th centuries and there is at present no means of dating the vessels more closely.

Two sherds of Staxton-type ware were recovered, from contexts 2002 and 3005. This ware was produced at several centres in north and east Yorkshire, including the type site of Staxton in the Vale of Pickering. Production is thought to have started in the mid/late 12th century and to have continued into the 15th century. However, most finds outside of the Vale of Pickering and the Wolds are found in later 12th to mid 13th-century contexts.

Three fragments of Northern Gritty ware were recovered, from contexts 2002 and 2006. This ware was produced at several centres in West Yorkshire from the late 12th to the 14th

centuries (and possibly later). The sherds come from a jug and a jar (and one indeterminate sherd).

Five fragments of Humberware were recovered, from contexts 1004, 1007 and 3004. This ware was produced at numerous centres on either side of the Humber, including York and Holme-upon-Spalding Moor (the closest potential source to Seaton Ross). Most of the sherds definitely come from jugs, one with a copper-stained glaze (the standard technique at York). One sherd, however, comes from an unglazed globular-bodied jar, probably with a flat base and everted rim.

Post-medieval

A single fragment of Ryedale ware was recovered from context 3001. This ware was produced at various centres around the fringes of the North Yorkshire moors, from the later 15th century into the 16th or 17th century.

The site also produced several sherds of various glazed red earthenware types, none of which can be closely dated. They consist of blackglazed ware (BL) from context 2006; miscellaneous glazed red earthenwares (GRE) from contexts 1004, 1012 and 3001, one of which has a horizontal oval-sectioned loop handle; and a sherd of Late Humberware (LHUM).

Early Modern

Two sherds of Nottingham stoneware were recovered, from contexts 2006 and 3001. The sherds come from bowls, one of which has roller-stamped decoration. Although these might date to the early to mid 18th century they are more likely to be of late 18th-century or later date.

Finally, a sherd from an unidentified English stoneware (ENGS) jar was recovered from context 3001. Such vessels have a similar date range to the Nottingham stoneware.

Stone

A fragment from a whetstone was recovered from context 2000. The stone is a medium-sand grade sandstone probably Millstone Grit. It is broken at both ends but has several worn facets which indicate its use.

Assessment

Trench 1

The finds from the fill of ditch 1006 are of mixed date and the latest sherd is a glazed red earthenware of late 16th to 18th-century date.

The finds from furrow 1007 are also of mixed date. In this case, the latest type present is the pantile fragment, of late 17th-century or later date. Fragments of tap slag were also present.

The ploughsoil also produced fragments of tap slag, together with a fragment of glazed red earthenware.

Trench 2

The finds from Trench 2 come from ploughsoil and the overlying turf and topsoil. The ploughsoil, contexts 2002 and 2006, form a group of mixed date, ranging from the medieval period to the late 19th century.

The finds from the turf and topsoil, 2000, include a large fragment of tap slag.

Trench 3

The finds from trench 3 come from the backfill of a feature, 3006 (contexts 3004 and 3005), and from ploughsoil (contexts 3001 and 3002).

The finds from Feature 3006 consist of medieval sherds, the latest of which are of Humberware. It may be significant that this feature produced no ceramic building material and no tap slag.

The ploughsoil produced a mixed assemblage including medieval pottery but including sherds of late 18th or 19th-century stonewares.

Interpretation

It is unlikely that Roman period finds are present on the site, despite the superficial similarity of some of the CBM to that from Roman York. Excluding this possibility, the earliest material from the site probably dates to the later 12th to mid 13th centuries and comes from the fill of F3006 and from the Trench 2 ploughsoil. These sherds have a mean weight of 14.63gm, which is about twice the mean weight of most pottery from ploughsoils from fields which have been ploughed throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods.

Later medieval pottery was present in the ploughsoils and in the backfill of features 1005, 1007 and 3006. These sherds are larger than the earlier types, with a mean weight of 28.94gm.

Post-medieval pottery was mainly found in the ploughsoils but also in the backfill of ditch 1005 and is of similar size and condition to the medieval pottery, with a mean weight of 38gm. The early modern stonewares were only present in the ploughsoil and their mean weight is much less (9.33 gm). This is only partially explicable in terms of the thinner walls of these vessels.

It is likely, therefore that the site was ploughed from the medieval period, before the mid 13th century, into the post-medieval period, although no clear end date can be given within the range late 16th to 18th century. In this interpretation the stoneware sherds post-date the ploughing.

The other finds from the site are equally large and unlikely to be present as manuring scatter. They are perhaps more likely to have come onto the site as a result of the levelling of the ridge and furrow in the post-medieval period. Most come from the ploughsoil, the turf and topsoil and the backfill of furrow 1007.

To summarise, it is suggested that the fields were ploughed from some time before the mid 13th century to some time in or after the late 16th century but that the size and condition of the potsherds is inconsistent with their being present as manuring scatter. This implies that a medieval and early post-medieval settlement was situated close to the site and it may be that some or all of these finds were redeposited on the site as a result of the levelling and backfill of agricultural features at some point in the post-medieval period. The ceramic building material and tap slag certainly seem to have entered the site at this late date.

Retention

All the finds should be retained for potential further study.

Given the likely late date of the tap slag and the poorly-dated context of the remaining iron finds it is not recommended that the iron and slag are either submitted for specialist study or for a conservation assessment. The iron finds, therefore, will inevitably decay.

Further Study

The finds do not require further study, illustration or publication at this time.

Appendix 1

trench	context	class	cname	subfabric	Form	Description	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Condition	Mean wt
1	1004	POTTERY	YG		JAR	COLLAR RIM	1	1	30		30.00
1	1004	POTTERY	GRE		JAR	INT BROWN GL;HORIZ LOOP HANDLE - OVAL-SECTIONED	1	1	99		99.00
1	1004	POTTERY	HUM		JUG	ROUNDED RIM;THUMB IMPRESSIONS AT R/H JOIN	1	1	34		34.00
1	1004	POTTERY	HUM		JUG	CUGL EXT;HORIZ GROOVES ON SHOULDER	1	1	17		17.00
1	1006	CBM	RTIL	CF EBOR 1			1	1	11		11.00
1	1006	POTTERY	YATE01				1	1	2	VABR	2.00
1	1006	CBM	PMTIL	FINE-TEXTURED;CALC BODY;RS MOULDING SAND <0.2MM	PANT	FORM?	1	1	37		37.00
1	1006	CBM	PMTIL	CM RED;CM WHITE POORLY MIXED	BRICK	SANDED MOULD	1	1	274		274.00
1	1007	IRON	IRON		WASTE	TAP SLAG	2	2	60		30.00
1	1007	POTTERY	HUM		JUG	SAGGING BASE;SINGLE THUMB IMPR	2	2	39		19.50
1	1012	CBM	MTIL	VARIEGATED;CM RED;CM WHITE	FLAT	ID?;COULD BE RTIL TEG	1	1	72		72.00
1	1012	IRON	IRON		WASTE	TAP SLAG	2	2	66		33.00
1	1012	POTTERY	GRE	FINE-TEXTURED BODY;RED SST;RED FE/CLAY;SA Q <2.0MM	PIP	INT PLAIN GL	1	1	4		4.00
2	2000	STONE	STONE	MEDIUM-GRAINED SST	HONE	OVAL CROSS-SECTION	1	1	24		24.00

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trench	context	class	cname	subfabric	Form	Description	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Condition	Mean wt
2	2000	POTTERY	LHUM		SJ	PLAIN INT AND EXT GL	1	1	25		25.00
2	2000	IRON	IRON		WASTE	TAP SLAG	1	1	587		587.00
2	2002	POTTERY	STAXT		JAR		2	2	23		11.50
2	2002	POTTERY	NGR		JUG	PLAIN SAGGING BASE;PLAIN GL SPLASHES EXT	1	1	48		48.00
2	2002	CBM	MTIL	CF HUM	FLOOR	UNGLAZED;MIGHT BE RTIL?	1	1	48		48.00
2	2006	POTTERY	BL	CM RED	BOWL	INT BLACK GL	1	1	63		63.00
2	2006	POTTERY	NGR		JAR	SAGGING BASE	1	1	3		3.00
2	2006	IRON	IRON		NAIL	SHAFT ONLY;NO TAPERING	1	1	35		35.00
2	2006	IRON	IRON		OBJECT	HEAVILY ENCRUSTED STRIP	1	1	26		26.00
2	2006	POTTERY	NOTS		BOWL		1	1	5		5.00
2	2006	POTTERY	NGR		JUG/JAR	EXT CUGL DRIBBLE	1	1	17		17.00
2	2006	PMGL	PMGL	LTGR	BOT	MOULDED;CYLINDRICAL BODY	1	1	13		13.00
2	2006	IRON	IRON		OBJECT	HEAVILY ENCRUSTED STRIP	1	1	13		13.00
3	3001	POTTERY	GRE		BOWL	INT AND EXT BROWN GL;CARINATED WITH HANDLE JOIN AT CARINATION	1	1	22		22.00
3	3001	POTTERY	RYEDALE		BOWL		1	1	11		11.00
3	3001	POTTERY	GRE		BOWL		1	1	15		15.00

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trench	context	class	cname	subfabric	Form	Description	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Condition	Mean wt
											15.00
3	3001	POTTERY	ENGS		JAR		1	1	8		8.00
3	3001	POTTERY	NOTS		BOWL	RSD	1	1	15		15.00
3	3002	CBM	MTIL		FLAT		1	1	9		9.00
3	3004	POTTERY	HUM		JAR	UNGLAZED;OXID EXT	1	1	89		89.00
3	3004	POTTERY	HUM		JUG	EXT PLAIN GL;HORIZ GROOVES ON NECK	1	1	22		22.00
3	3005	POTTERY	YG		JAR		1	1	5		5.00
3	3005	POTTERY	STAXT		BOWL		1	1	12		12.00