

Assessment of the Pottery from Moss Street Depot, York (YMD'03)

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A collection pottery from excavations carried out at Moss Street, York by Field Archaeology Specialists Ltd was submitted to the authors for identification and assessment. The collection consists mostly of Roman pottery, dating to the 2nd to 4th centuries, of which the majority is of later 2nd to early 3rd century date. Two sherds of Anglo-Scandinavian date were identified and the remainder of the pottery is of later 11th-century and later date.

The Roman pottery includes sherds of unusual amphora types which would repay further study.

Description

The pottery was identified and recorded using the classification system of the York Archaeological Trust (Monaghan 1997; Brooks 1987; Holdsworth 1978;1993; Jennings 1992). A list of codes used is given as Appendix 1. The pottery record consists of details of the pottery ware type, form, decoration, use and condition, by context and quantified by sherd count, maximum number of vessels (i.e. obvious joining sherds count as one but no attempt to find cross-fits between contexts has been made) and weight (Appendix 2).

Roman

No sherds of definite late 1st/early 2nd century date were present although some types with a long date range could date to this period. However, no sherds of rustic ware were found and this type was the main cooking pottery in York in the late 1st and early 2nd century.

Types datable to the early 2nd century were present. Most of the diagnostic pieces were Samian vessels (Dr 18/31; Dr 27 and Dr 67) which fell from popularity in the mid 2nd century.

Most of the Roman pottery, however, is of types typical of the later 2nd and early 3rd centuries and most of this pottery is of types produced at York itself (Eboracum ware – YATE1, YATE7 and YATW1, mortaria (YATM3 and YATM4); local greyware – YATG1, and local burnished greyware – B3). These vessels include a few of types which are thought to show North African influence and are consequently dated to the early 3rd century (platters and head pots).

Non-local and imported pottery of later 2nd to 3rd century date includes Brockley Hill and Verulamium-region mortaria (YATM15); Northern French mortaria (YATM11-12); Mancetter-Hartshill mortaria (YATM14), Dressel 20 amphorae (including one with a fine textured fabric

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characteristics of the latest products) and some Nene Valley colour-coated wares (YATC1 to C3) and Dorset Black-Burnished wares (YATB1) as well as a range of Samian ware vessels (Dr 31; Dr 32; Dr 33; Dr 37; Dr 45; Dr 68; Dr 72; and Curle 23).

Mid to late 3rd century pottery is represented by Dales-type shelly ware (YATH1) but only five sherds of this fabric were recorded, of which only one is definitely from a Dales ware jar. However, Nene Valley folded beakers with scale decoration, which are contemporary with Dales shelly ware, were common. Six sherds of Knapton jars in calcite-tempered ware fabric were present. This is a later 3rd-century to early 4th-century type.

Fourth century pottery consisted of Crambeck greyware (YATB12) and Calcite-tempered ware (YATK0), including a late 4th-century Huntcliffe jar.

The range of forms present includes vessels used for food preparation and cooking, drinking, and dining. In addition, a number of amphora sherds were present (Table 1). Most of the sherds are of Dressel 20 globular amphora, produced in the Guadalquivir valley and used mainly as containers for olive oil, and Gauloise amphora (YATAP27-30) produced in northern Gaul and probably used mainly as wine containers. However, the collection also contained single examples of Peacock and Williams Classes 13 and 50 amphora (Peacock & Williams 1986) also known as Liparian amphora and Richborough 527; three sherds of a single Chalk 6 type; a coarse Baetican cylindrical amphora; vessels with black sand inclusions (probably from central Italy) and a group of 16 sherds of an unidentified amphora type. These sherds might come from a single vessel, although no joining sherds were found despite being searched for. The fabric is a red-firing calcareous clay, with a salt surface and contains sparse rounded polished quartzes. The vessel, or vessels, was globular but no featured sherds were present. Thin section and chemical analysis is recommended of this and of the Chalk 6 vessel, whose source is at present unknown.

Table 1

cname	Sum of NoV	Sum of Nosh	Sum of Weight
YATAA	30	44	1278
YATAP13	1	1	6
YATAP25	46	65	2634
YATAP27-30	25	31	1110
YATAP50	1	3	171
Grand Total	103	144	5199

Although it is difficult to separate all of the pottery into chronological groups (and there is a huge amount of mixing and residuality, so this cannot be done stratigraphically) there is a clear difference in the character of the 2nd/early 3rd century and the later 3rd century pottery. The former consists of a range of vessel types whilst the latter consists mainly of beakers and jars. To some extent, this followed the general pattern of pottery use in York, but it seems that there is indeed an over-representation of beakers on the site. Given that the area

was used for burial it is possible that this concentration is related to rituals such as funeral feasts and the giving of libations to the dead.

Anglo-Scandinavian

Two sherds of Anglo-Scandinavian York ware (YORKA) were recorded. Recent thin section and chemical analysis of vessels from Fishergate shows that it was produced in West Yorkshire, including Thorne (Vince and Steane 2005). Both sherds come from jars. This ware was produced in the late 9th and early 10th centuries but was in decline in York, if indeed it was still being used, in the mid/late 10th century. Both were unstratified (C1100) and there is therefore a possibility that they were brought onto the site as a result of earthmoving activities at a much later period. However, a similar small collection of late 9th-early 10th-century wares was noted by the authors on another recent site in the Mount area.

Medieval

Three hundred and eleven sherds of medieval pottery, representing no more than two hundred and sixty-one vessels were recorded (Table 2). The most common type was York Gritty ware, which was current between the mid 11th and the mid 13th centuries. However, in most contexts where this ware was found there were also sherds of York Splashed ware (YSP), and York Glazed ware (YORK) mostly from jugs. This suggests that most occupation actually took place in the later 12th century (splashed ware was not used in the 13th century).

Later 13th - to 15th -century wares were rare (BRAN, HUM). Northern Gritty ware and Red Sandy ware were also identified, but neither type is capable of close dating at present.

Table 2 Maximum vessel count for medieval pottery

Cname	JUG	UNID	JAR	CUP	PIPKIN	Grand Total
BEVO2B	1					1
BRAN	6		1			7
HUM	4		1			5
HUM?				1		1
NGR			1			1
RED SANDY	1					1
YG			135			135
YORK	22		26			48
YSP	57	1	2		2	62
Grand Total	91	1	166	1	2	261

Post-Medieval

Seventeen sherds of post-medieval pottery were recorded (Table 3). The cannot be closely dated, although the Martincamp flask is of a type which is only found in the later 16th to mid 17th centuries and a similar date is likely for the Brown-glazed earthenware (BERTH) and

Ryedale ware. The sherd of Staffordshire slipware posset pot (STSL POSS) is of later 17th to mid 18th-century date.

Table 3

Cname	JUG	BOWL	JAR	FLASK	PANC	POSS	Grand Total
BERTH			1		1		2
BL					7		7
GRE		5					5
LHUM	1						1
MART				1			1
RYEDALE					1		1
STSL						1	1
Grand Total	1	5	1	1	9	1	18

Early Modern

Twenty-two sherds of later 18th or 19th-century date were recorded (Table 4). The most common type is the unglazed flower pot (LPMLOC FLP). The miscellaneous refined whitewares and the salt-glazed stoneware drainpipe are likely to be of later 19th century or later date (WHITE and ENGS).

Table 4

cname	JUG	BOWL	JAR	DRAIN	FLP	PLATE	Grand Total
ENGs			2	1			3
LPMLOC					10		10
NOTS			1				1
PEAR	1		1				2
SUND		1					1
WHITE		1				4	5
Grand Total	1	2	4	1	10	4	22

Assessment

There is a large amount of residual Roman pottery in virtually all of the deposits and it is evident that the archaeological deposits have been subjected to post-depositional processes. Therefore, determining the date of cutting and backfill of any of the features depends on isolating the latest sherds in each deposit, interpreting them (residual, contemporary or intrusive) and then applying that interpretation to the site stratigraphy.

The scheme put forward here is based on our interpretation of the stratigraphic sequence and the pottery assemblages and may therefore be superseded.

Roman

Twelve features may date to the Roman period (Table 5). Two of these contain post-Roman sherds. Those in Ditch 23 include post-medieval pottery, which can certainly be discounted as intrusive. Those in Ditch 56 also include one post-medieval sherd and a single medieval sherd. Since this ditch was backfilled before inhumation burials 4, 33 and 69 were dug into its fill, and these appear to be of late Roman date, both sherds must be intrusive.

Assemblages from features which contain only 2nd/early 3rd century types are mainly very small, and this suggests that in most cases a larger sample would have produced later sherds. Even the largest of these assemblages, from Ditch 32, is probably later, since the feature cuts feature 31, which contains a later 3rd century sherd.

Only one feature, grave 4, contained an assemblage with a later 3rd-century *terminus post quem* and since the sherds do not consist of deliberately buried grave goods but were presumably in the grave soil before it was dug and backfilled even this feature is as likely to be 4th as late 3rd century in date.

This then creates a dichotomy. On the one hand, most of the Roman pottery is earlier than c.250 and on the other hand, few of the excavated features are likely to be that early. It is likely, therefore, that the pottery was present in horizontal deposits on the site through which the features were cut. This is consistent with the low sherd/vessel ratio found in the Roman pottery from these features. The mean weight of sherds from these features is also low (36.5 gm for 2nd.early 3rd century material; 5gm for later 3rd (almost all of which consists of beaker sherds) and 21.1gm for 4th-century pottery).

One possibility is that the 2nd/3rd-century material was dumped on the site, either in one go, or accumulatively over a period of several decades. If the latter theory is correct, then perhaps this site was used as a midden, situated on the outskirts of the Colonia. If the former theory is true, then perhaps it was associated with landscaping.

Table 5

context group	2n/early 3 rd C	L3rd C	4 th C
23	31	3	1
31	1		1
60	6	1	2
56	47	20	3
61	10	1	3
32	18		
34	4		
4	26	15	
51	1		
57	2		

59	3		
62	1		
Grand Total	150	40	10

Medieval

Twelve features probably date to the medieval period (Table 6). Five of these produced only sherds of Roman date and York Gritty ware (19, 21, 28, 64 and 65). However, one of these, F21, is later than F20, which can be dated to the later 12th century or later.

A sherd of post-medieval date from ditch 19 has been interpreted as being intrusive but it is arguable about whether the late medieval pottery from ditches 42 and 55 should be used to date the features or is also intrusive. The medieval pottery has a low sherd/vessel ratio and a mean size of 15gm.

Table 6

Context group	BEVO2B	BRAN	HUM	MART	YG	YORK	YSP	Grand Total
20					14	4	10	28
24					10	1	5	16
42		1			1	1	3	6
36	1				3	2		6
40						1		1
54						2		2
55		1	1		3	3	5	13
21							1	1
65							1	1
19				1	1			2
28					1			1
64					1			1
Grand Total	1	2	1	1	34	14	25	78

Post-medieval and early modern

The post-medieval and early modern pottery is either intrusive in Roman or medieval deposits, comes from horizontal deposits (and can therefore be interpreted as horticultural) or is unstratified (Table 7).

Table 7

Context	BERTH	BL	ENG	GRE	LHUM	LPMLOC	MART	NOTS	PEAR	RYEDALE	STSL	SUND	WHITE
F19: 1101							1						

F23: 1107	1	1
F56: 1162	1	
1002	2	
1017		1
1020	7	2
1100	1 7 2 5 1 1 1 2	5

Further Work

A small number of vessels deserve further study (Table 8). Seven should be illustrated, and a catalogue entry written to describe and discuss them. These include a fragment of lamp-chimney, a vessel type whose precise function is not known but which is thought possibly to be associated with incense burning (like the tazza form). They also include a fragment of a whiteware figurine, which appears to be the architectural surround to a small pipeclay figurine. Nine sherds of amphora should be thin sectioned and chemically analysed in order to determine or confirm their identity.

Table 8

Period	Feature	Context	Action	cname	Form	Description
MED	19	1101	TS;ICPS	YATAA	AMPH	
MED	29	1112	TS;ICPS	YATAA	AMPH	
MED	19	1159	DR4;TS;ICPS	YATAA	AMPH	POINTED BASE WITH ADDED LAYER OF BLACK SAND-TEMPERED CLAY
	63	1173	TS;ICPS	YATAA	AMPH	SHL=1100; 1117
MED	64	1181	TS;ICPS	YATAA	AMPH	-
MED	29	1112	DR6	YATE01	FACE POT	WHEEL STAMPS CF MONAGHAN 1997; ALSO SAME STAMP ON MORTARIA IN CORPUS?
	50	1165	DR5	YATP00	FIGU	COLUMN, PRESUMABLY FROM SURROUND OF GODDESS
MED	24	1109	TS;ICPS	YATAA	AMPH	-
LROM	32	1117	TS;ICPS	YATAA	AMPH	SHL=1100;1181
	50	1165	DR7	YATE01	LAMP-CHIMNEY	HANDMADE WITH CUTOUTS
		1037	TS;ICPS	YATAP50	AMPH	STRAIGHT STRAP HANDLE
US	-	1100	TS;ICPS	YATAA	AMPH	SHL=1117; 1173
		1051	DR1	YSP	JUG	STRAP HANDLE WITH TWO THUMB IMPR AT B/H JOIN

Publication

The results of the scientific analysis and a summary of the interpretation arguments put forward in this assessment should be published.

Costing

Until 31st March 2006, thin sections and chemical analyses can be obtained through AVAC at £23.50 plus VAT each. Therefore, the 6 thin section and 6 chemical analyses recommended would cost £282.00 plus VAT.

Checking seven pot drawings would cost £25.00 plus VAT (the minimum AVAC charge).

Summarizing the pottery and interpretation presentation given in this assessment for publication would take one day (£188.00 plus VAT until 31st March 2006, thereafter £192.00 plus VAT).

This is a grand total of £495.00 plus VAT or £581.63 in total.

Retention

The stratified finds should be retained for further study.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Barbara Precious and Paul Tyers for comments on some of the Roman pottery. The remaining identifications and assessment is the responsibility of the authors.

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Appendix 1

cname	subfabric	full name	period	earliest date	latest date	Broad source	Narrow source	source	bibliography	Sherds	Vessels	Wt(gm)
BERTH		Black glazed earthenware	pmed	1550	1800	England	various	various		2	2	49
BEVO2B		Beverley Glazed ware type 2B	emed	1170	1350	England	East Yorkshire	Beverley	Watkins 1991, 90-96	1	1	1
BL		Black-glazed wares	pmed	1500	1750	England	various	various		7	7	174
BRAN		Brandsby-type ware	med	1250	1350	England	Yorkshire	Brandsby	Mainman 1993, 589	8	7	84
CBM		Ceramic building material	na	0	0	na	na	na	na	107	107	1916
ENGs		Unspecified English Stoneware	emod	1750	1900	England	nk	? numerous sources	Mainman 1993, 665	3	3	25
FCLAY		Fired clay	na	0	0	NA				1	1	17
GRE		Glazed Red Earthenware	pmed	1500	1650	England	various	various		5	5	91
HUM		Humberware	lmed	1250	1500	England	Humber Estuary	various	Mainman 1993, 590	5	5	139
HUM?		Humber ware?	lmed	1250	1500	England	Humber Estuary	various	Mainman 1993, 590	1	1	7
LHUM		Late Humber ware	emod	1550	1850	England	Yorkshire	Unknown		1	1	161
LPMLOC		Late Post-medieval wares (local to site)	lpmed	1750	1950	England	na	na		10	10	186
MART		Martincamp stoneware	pmed	1450	1700	France	Northwest France		Mainman 1993, 665; Vince 1985, 60	1	1	103
MTIL		Medieval tile (unspecified)	med	1150	1550	England	na	na		16	16	739
NGR		Northern Gritty ware	med	1150	1350	England	Yorkshire	Various		1	1	6
NOTS		Nottingham stoneware	pmed	1690	1900	England	Nottinghamshire	Nottingham	Mainman 1993, 665	1	1	10
PEAR		Pearl ware	emod	1770	1900	England	Staffordshire/Bristol	various	Vince 1985; Vince 2002	2	2	40

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cname	subfabric	full name	period	earliest date	latest date	Broad source	Narrow source	source	bibliography	Sherds	Vessels	Wt(gm)
PIPECLAY		Pipeclay	na	0	0					1	1	27
PMTIL		Post-medieval ceramic building material	pmed	0	0					7	3	78
RED SANDY		Sandy redwares	med	1150	1350	England	unknown	unknown	Mainman 1993, 589-90	1	1	10
RPOT		unidentified Roman wares	rom	40	400	na	na	na				0
RTIL		Roman tile	rom	40	400	England	-			82	81	3305
RTIL?			rom	40	400					41	41	637
RYEDALE		Ryedale ware	pmed	1550	1700	England	Yorkshire	inc Stearsby	Mainman 1993, 665	1	1	24
SLAG		Slag - type unspecified	nk	0	0	nk				1	1	13
STSL		Staffordshire/Bristol slipware	pmed	1680	1800	England	Staffordshire or Bristol	Staffordshire or Bristol	Vince 1985, 59, M6.G13-M7.A3;Vince 2002	2	1	16
SUND		Sunderland coarseware	pmed	1800	1900	England	North-East	Sunderland	Mainman 1993, 665	1	1	5
WHITE		Modern Whiteware	emod	1850	1900	England	Staffordshire	? numerous sources	Vince 1985, 59, M6.G13-M7.A3;Vince 2002	4	4	24
WHITE	BROWN GLAZE	Modern Whiteware	emod	1850	1900	England	Staffordshire	? numerous sources	Vince 1985, 59, M6.G13-M7.A3;Vince 2002	1	1	9
YATAA		Unidentified Amphora	rom	0	0					22	18	309
YATAA	GLOSSY QUARTZ	Unidentified Amphora	rom	0	0					16	7	686
YATAA	BLACK SAND	Unidentified Amphora	rom	0	0					5	4	223
YATAA	COARSE BAETICAN FABRIC	Unidentified Amphora	rom	0	0					1	1	60
YATAP13		Peacock and Williams Type 13 amphora	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	1	1	6

cname	subfabric	full name	period	earliest date	latest date	Broad source	Narrow source	source	bibliography	Sherds	Vessels	Wt(gm)
YATAP25		DR20	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	66	48	3808
YATAP25	LATE	DR20	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	22	20	1453
YATAP27-30		Peacock & Williams Type 27 amphora	rom	40	400					31	25	1110
YATAP50		Chalk 6 Amphora	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	3	1	171
YATB01		Black Burnished ware 1	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	69	67	1164
YATB02		Black Burnished ware 2	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	1	1	27
YATB03		Grey B3	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	83	72	1607
YATB07		Black Burnished ware 2	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	5	5	44
YATB12		Crambeck B12	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	18	18	344
YATB15		Grey B15	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	10	10	351
YATC01		NVCC	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	90	82	559
YATC02		NVCC	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	21	13	284
YATC03		NVCC	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	156	129	930
YATC24		Moselkeramik	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	14	14	18
YATE01		Ebor 1	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	169	162	2834
YATE07		Harsh Ebor 1	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	17	16	235
YATG01		Dales-type greyware	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	181	177	2938
YATG08		Grey	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	3	2	58
YATH01		Dales	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	6	6	32
YATK00		Misc calcite gritted	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	51	36	1196
YATM02		Crambeck mortaria	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	1	1	26
YATM03		Eboracum and local mortaria	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	5	5	176

cname	subfabric	full name	period	earliest date	latest date	Broad source	Narrow source	source	bibliography	Sherds	Vessels	Wt(gm)
YATM04		Eboracum and local mortaria	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	1	1	64
YATM11-12		Northern French Hartley Group I or II mortaria	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	1	1	70
YATM12		Northern French Hartley Group II mortaria	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	1	1	42
YATM14	ID?	Mancetter-Hartshill mortaria	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	1	1	1
YATM14		Mancetter-Hartshill mortaria	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	27	21	1292
YATM15		Brockley Hill and Verulamium region mortaria	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	4	4	484
YATP00		White	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	32	32	561
YATP08		White	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	1	1	11
YATS00		Samian	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	163	145	1979
YATS00	ID?	Samian	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	1	1	12
YATS04		EGS	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	1	1	6
YATW01		Ebor white	rom	40	400				Monaghan 1997	11	10	146
YG		Yorkshire gritty ware	sn-emed	1050	1250	England	Yorkshire/North		Mainman 1993, 585;Watkins 1991, 78, 87	139	135	1575
YORK	FINE	York glazed ware/York White ware	emed	1150	1300	England	Yorkshire	not known	Mainman 1993, 588;Watkins 1991, 89;Jennings 1992	1	1	11
YORK	ID?	York glazed ware/York White ware	emed	1150	1300	England	Yorkshire	not known	Mainman 1993, 588;Watkins 1991, 89;Jennings 1992	2	2	95
YORK		York glazed ware/York White ware	emed	1150	1300	England	Yorkshire	not known	Mainman 1993, 588;Watkins 1991,	54	44	1029

cname	subfabric	full name	period	earliest date	latest date	Broad source	Narrow source	source	bibliography	Sherds	Vessels	Wt(gm)
YORK	ID?;RED PELLETS	York glazed ware/York White ware	emed	1150	1300	England	Yorkshire	not known	89;Jennings 1992 Mainman 1993, 588;Watkins 1991, 89;Jennings 1992	1	1	42
YORKA		York A ware	Isax	850	950	England	Yorkshire	unknown	Mainman 1993, 665;Watkins 1991, 72-3	2	2	52
YSP		York splashed ware	sn-emed	1050	1250	England	Yorkshire	VARIOUS	Mainman 1993, 585-6	42	13	1038
YSP	GRITTY	York splashed ware	sn-emed	1050	1250	England	Yorkshire	VARIOUS	Mainman 1993, 585-6	22	16	530
YSP	GRITTY LIGHTFIRING	York splashed ware	sn-emed	1050	1250	England	Yorkshire	VARIOUS	Mainman 1993, 585-6	2	2	20
YSP	LIGHT-FIRING GRITTY	York splashed ware	sn-emed	1050	1250	England	Yorkshire	VARIOUS	Mainman 1993, 585-6	2	2	8
YSP	RED SANDY	York splashed ware	sn-emed	1050	1250	England	Yorkshire	VARIOUS	Mainman 1993, 585-6	26	26	369
YSP	RED SANDY FABRIC	York splashed ware	sn-emed	1050	1250	England	Yorkshire	VARIOUS	Mainman 1993, 585-6	3	3	75
ZDATE		General context date	na	0	0	na	na	na		38	74	0
ZZZ		General context comments	na	0	0	na				2	2	0

Appendix 2

The archive catalogue for YMD'03 pottery is present in digital format in the site archive. The following fields are present:

Context, Action, trench, class, cname, subfabric, Form, Description, Part, Nosh, NoV, Weight, Condition, Use

Abbreviations: Ipmed – late post-medieval; BS – body sherds; ABRA – abraded; H – handle; TS – thin section; ICPS – inductively coupled plasma spectroscopy; DR – to be drawn.