

## **Preliminary Assessment of the Pottery from 89, The Mount, York (OSA05 EX01)**

***Alan Vince and Kate Steane***

Fourteen boxes of pottery were recovered from the excavations at 89, The Mount, undertaken by On-Site Archaeology Ltd (Site Code: OSA05 EX01). An archive record was made of two boxes of this pottery (Appendix 1) and the remainder were examined and a terminus post quem for the deposition of the assemblage was determined and the number of sherds present counted (Appendix 2). The presence of vessels which might warrant further work was noted but no details of these vessels were made.

### **Description**

In total 4365 sherds of pottery were counted to which a small number of unstratified sherds, not examined in this preliminary assessment, should be added.

### **Early Roman**

Fifty-five contexts produced assemblages with tpqs of later 1<sup>st</sup> century. In many cases, this date merely implies that the group is small or contains no diagnostic types (since, for example, undiagnostic body sherds of Ebor ware ({Monaghan 1997 #113} Fabric E) can only be broadly dated between the late 1<sup>st</sup> and the mid 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries). Several rustic ware jars were present, often as large sherds or groups of sherds. This type was often used as a container for cremation burials and seems to have rapidly fallen out of fashion with the introduction of Dorset Black Burnished ware (YAT B1) and its various copies (e.g. B3 and B7). These vessels therefore provide good evidence for the existence of activity, quite possibly including cremation burial, on the site, before c.120AD. No diagnostic Samian types, restricted in date to the late 1<sup>st</sup>/early 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries, were noted, but a closer examination of the Samian ware from these features might provide a closer estimate of the date of the earliest activity on the site. Sherds of two roughcast vessels from context 4369 and also worth closer examination for the evidence that they might throw on this period. The pottery from context 4361 was noted as being fresh, which suggests that it was buried soon after breakage rather than being redeposited or included in plough or garden soils.

Features producing assemblages with a late 1<sup>st</sup> century or later tpq included foundations, beam slots, post-holes and stake holes, as well as one cremation (4515) and features interpreted as tree throws.

***Table 1***

Context	Total
4002	17

The Alan Vince Archaeology Consultancy, 25 West Parade, Lincoln, LN1 1NW

<http://www.postex.demon.co.uk/index.html>

A copy of this report is archived online at

<http://www.avac.uklinux.net/potcat/pdfs/avac2006038.pdf>

4004	5
4010	2
4032	1
4039	1
4056	3
4078	1
4083	1
4092	3
4133	1
4137	1
4142	10
4150	4
4195	2
4212	3
4226	3
4228	10
4245	1
4270	1
4275	2
4292	1
4294	2
4299	1
4301	19
4302	15
4317	1
4337	2
4340	8
4343	1
4358	1
4369	21
4370	3
4373	18
4381	1
4408	4
4409	3
4412	1
4422	2
4426	1
4450	1
4463	1
4476	2
4515	1
4521	1
4543	1
4551	3
4563	4
4578	1
4593	3
4603	1
4610	1
4655	1
4657	5
5053	1
5055	1

Grand Total	205
-------------	-----

### Early 2<sup>nd</sup> century or later

Three hundred and sixty-eight sherds of pottery came from assemblages with an early 2<sup>nd</sup>-century or later tpq (Table 2). The pottery types which gave this date include Dorset BB1 and its copies, Ebor ware and local wheelthrown greywares with burnished lattice decoration. In some cases the BB1 vessel forms also suggest an early 2<sup>nd</sup> century date but in most cases the assemblage could be much later, up to the mid 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

*Table 2*

Context	Total
4036	1
4050	2
4059	20
4063	2
4065	3
4067	8
4076	2
4082	6
4113	3
4180	2
4183	6
4192	13
4194	1
4198	17
4232	3
4247	7
4260	7
4264	5
4268	57
4277	2
4321	2
4323	1
4338	10
4376	2
4382	2
4405	9
4411	9
4413	2
4418	14
4428	17
4443	9
4454	3
4466	2
4494	16
4499	5
4517	3
4518	12

4519	4
4533	30
4535	17
4545	7
4557	1
4567	6
4585	2
4594	3
4614	6
4617	2
4621	3
4641	1
4651	1
Grand Total	368

Features with early 2<sup>nd</sup> century or later tpqs include two cremations (4517 and 4567), as well as structural features (beam slots, post-holes, slots, robber trenches), gullies, and other linear features and tree throws.

### Mid 2<sup>nd</sup>-century or later

Three assemblages were given a tpq of mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century or later. These include grave 4380. In total they produced 51 sherds and are dated through the typology of vessels rather than the presence of new types.

### Late 2<sup>nd</sup> century or later

Three hundred and sixty-five sherds came from assemblages with a late 2<sup>nd</sup> century or later tpq. They were dated mainly by the presence of Nene Valley colour-coated ware without any signs of being from indented beakers. Assemblages containing Nene Valley castor boxes and lids were assigned this tpq. In most cases, there was no positive evidence that these were indeed earlier in date than those assigned 3<sup>rd</sup> century dates but in theory the earliest sherds of this ware could occur in York in deposits of late 2<sup>nd</sup> century date. The contexts producing these assemblages include three graves (4280, 4380, 5059), structural features (post-holes and robber trenches), linear features and pits, as well as a ploughsoil.

*Table 3*

Context	Total
4112	22
4124	4
4126	5
4163	1
4170	2
4182	1
4201	8
4224	1
4234	16
4249	1
4280	7

4297	7
4327	11
4330	62
4335	15
4348	24
4380	48
4410	24
4478	2
4503	11
4507	21
4562	3
4596	1
4613	18
4623	17
4626	6
4645	11
5011	7
5059	9
Grand Total	365

### Early to mid 3<sup>rd</sup> century

Two hundred and twenty-one sherds were recovered from assemblages assigned an early to mid 3<sup>rd</sup> century date (Table 4). Early 3<sup>rd</sup> century tpqs were assigned on the basis of typological parallels with vessels published by Monaghan as occurring first in his horizon 3a (e.g. face jugs). Mid 3<sup>rd</sup> century dates were assigned on the basis of the presence of Dales-type shelly ware (YAT Fabric H), obtuse burnished lattice jars in BB1 or other burnished wares. Small assemblages may well be of later 3<sup>rd</sup> century date but some larger groups containing fresh Ebor wares had the appearance of being contemporary groups.

*Table 4*

Context	Total
4286	9
4322	3
4329	37
4378	2
4412	30
4474	88
4511	9
4523	29
4603	1
5068	13
Grand Total	221

Only three structural features, all post-holes, produced assemblages with an early to mid 3<sup>rd</sup> century tpq, 4378, 4511 and 4603. All the other finds came from ditches, gullies and other linear features.

### Later 3<sup>rd</sup>-century

Four hundred and fifty-four sherds were recovered from assemblages with a late 3<sup>rd</sup> century or later tpq (Table 5). Assemblages were assigned this tpq by the presence of Nene Valley colour coated indented beakers, usually with barbotine scale decoration, and by the presence of Crambeck Greyware (YAT B12), and Calcite-tempered ware (YAT K). In most cases, the latter two types occurred in small quantities and since both were much more frequent in York in the 4<sup>th</sup> than the 3<sup>rd</sup> century it is likely that activity tailed off in the early 4<sup>th</sup> century.

Contexts producing assemblages with late 3<sup>rd</sup> century or later tpqs include four burials (4087, 4256, 4482, 5014), four post-holes (4012, 4061, 4172 and 4569), pits, ditches, gullies, and tree throws.

*Table 5*

Context	Total
4012	6
4052	14
4061	2
4087	8
4090	2
4097	100
4143	91
4144	29
4172	2
4190	16
4203	22
4243	28
4256	12
4262	11
4305	11
4346	6
4482	13
4513	9
4569	4
5007	2
5014	66
Grand Total	454

### Late Roman and Anglian

There was no pottery from the site which was noted as dating between the early 4<sup>th</sup> and the mid 9<sup>th</sup> centuries. A moderately large collection of Roman pottery was present in the fills of medieval features and this was not examined in detail. However, where vessels types were observed they were of similar character to that from stratified Roman deposits. There is certainly no Anglian pottery in the collection.

## Anglo-Scandinavian

A single sherd of York A ware was recorded from the boxes which were recorded in detail but none was noted in spot-dating. However, both York A and York D wares are very similar to Roman oxidized and greyware jars and it is possible that sherds were missed in the spot-dating process. The sherd came from pit fill 4495 and was associated with 21 Roman sherds.

## 11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries

Twenty three assemblages were assigned a mid 11<sup>th</sup> century or later tpq on the basis of the presence of York Gritty ware. However, in several cases there was only a single sherd of medieval pottery in a large assemblage of Roman date and it is quite possible that in many cases the medieval sherds are intrusive. In total, 116 sherds of York Gritty ware were present, compared with 394 sherds of Roman date. These medieval sherds include some smashed vessels, indicative of primary rubbish disposal, and in general the medieval sherds all look to be fresh. The smashed vessels come from pits, 4393 and 4491.

Context	Total
4003	31
4015	7
4018	2
4033	4
4100	6
4106	3
4164	2
4166	2
4169	6
4174	101
4207	26
4214	2
4217	1
4353	1
4365	18
4381	63
4393	83
4401	73
4415	2
4424	3
4491	51
4541	11
5027	2
5034	10
Grand Total	510

## Early 12<sup>th</sup> century

A terminus of early 12<sup>th</sup> century or later was assigned to features which produced sherds of splashed wares with no later types. In total, 76 sherds were recovered from five assemblages, but a number of the sherds are residual Roman and only 22 were of medieval

date. The contexts which produced these sherds consisted of pit fills, post holes and ploughsoil.

*Table 6*

Context	Total
4080	3
4128	23
4221	10
4304	16
5022	24
Grand Total	76

### **Mid 12<sup>th</sup> century**

Three hundred and ninety-seven sherds of pottery were recorded from assemblages assigned a mid 12<sup>th</sup> century or later tpq. Of these, 166 were of medieval date. The distinction between this group and those assigned an early 12<sup>th</sup> century or later date is subjective, based on the quantity of glazed to unglazed wares and it is quite likely that the two groups are contemporary. Most of the assemblages come from pits but context 4154 is recorded as a burial fill. However, the fill includes a number of sherds forming the profile of smashed York Gritty ware bowl, an unusual form. This would be much more likely to indicate a primary refuse deposit.

*Table 7*

Context	Total
4037	14
4058	81
4154	52
4161	51
4167	15
4236	28
4315	4
4352	102
4449	50
Grand Total	397

### **Later 12<sup>th</sup> century**

One thousand and forty-eight sherds were recovered from assemblages assigned a late 12<sup>th</sup> century or later tpq (Table 7). Of these, 596 are of Roman date and 452 of medieval date. The medieval sherds include Beverley glazed ware and York glazed ware, both of which came into use in York in the later 12<sup>th</sup> century but continued in use into the mid 13<sup>th</sup> century. It is the presence of these types which determine the late 12<sup>th</sup> century tpq but the most common ware is York Gritty ware, as in the earlier medieval assemblages.



The majority of these assemblages come from the fills of pits (8 contexts, 262 medieval sherds) but include one grave fill, presumably a later Roman feature dated by intrusive sherds.

*Table 8*

Context	Total
4014	32
4102	31
4135	1
4159	54
4187	132
4217	44
4223	6
4238	27
4240	1
4258	86
4280	82
4281	43
4311	174
4312	147
4313	127
4388	37
5005	12
5006	10
5029	2
Grand Total	1048

### **Late 14<sup>th</sup> century**

Six possible sherds of Humber ware were recovered, giving a late 14<sup>th</sup>-century or later tpq to the assemblage in which they were found (Table 8).

*Table 9*

Context	Total
4024	2
4029	1
4048	2
4071	7
4283	2
Grand Total	14

### **Post-medieval**

Five sherds of post-medieval pottery were recovered (Table 9), found with 15 residual Roman and medieval sherds.

*Table 10*

Context	Total
4006	1
4127	1

5037	15
5040	3
Grand Total	20

### Early Modern

Eleven sherds of late 18<sup>th</sup> century or later date were recorded (Table 10). They were found with 26 residual Roman and medieval sherds.

*Table 11*

Context	Total
4085	11
5008	1
5010	20
5039	4
5049	1
Grand Total	37

### Assessment

The potential of the pottery from 89, The Mount, to increase knowledge of the archaeology of Roman and later York depends to a great extent on the stratification of the site. This preliminary assessment was prepared in advance of any phasing of the site/ Nevertheless, certain conclusions can be drawn.

Firstly, the site was definitely in use in the late 1<sup>st</sup> or early 2<sup>nd</sup> century, prior to the foundation of the colonia on the south bank of the Ouse. Three possible activities might have been responsible for the pottery found on the site: settlement; burial; and refuse disposal of which the most likely is a mixture of burial and occupation. It is likely that there was no change of function in early 2<sup>nd</sup> century. A notable feature of the Roman ceramics is the presence of an abnormally high number of platters and dishes. These seem to span the later 1<sup>st</sup> to early 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries and several large fragments and smashed vessels were present. These could have come from burials, accompanying cremations. Other possible cremation vessels include a complete lid (from a cremation fill) and the rustic ware jars already mentioned. However, it is possible that later features disturbed earlier cremations and the incidence of these smashed 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>-century vessels may indicate where such burials took place. It is also possible that the platters were used in grave-side rituals and a study of the range of types found in 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> century contexts might shed light on the organisation of the cemetery and the activities which took place there.

Similarly, there is a high incidence of beakers in deposits of later 2<sup>nd</sup> to late 3<sup>rd</sup> century date, some of which are the fills of burials. However, these deposits also contain vessels used in food preparation and it is possible that occupation took place on the site at this time.

The lack of definite 4<sup>th</sup>-century pottery may reflect a change in land use, or a change in burial ritual in the early 4<sup>th</sup> century. Most likely, however, the site was abandoned until the later 9<sup>th</sup>

to early 10<sup>th</sup> century. If other features can be assigned to this Anglo-Scandinavian phase then the pottery from their fills should be examined in more detail to see if more contemporary pottery can be found.

The medieval sequence seems to indicate a 12<sup>th</sup>-century occupation with little evidence for continuation into the 13<sup>th</sup> century, no pottery of later 13<sup>th</sup> or early 14<sup>th</sup> century date and only a handful of later medieval and post-medieval sherds. Since some of this pottery comes from ploughsoils and garden soils, it is likely that the site was abandoned during the late 12<sup>th</sup> or early 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. This is a similar pattern to that found on some other sites south of Micklegate Bar, for example, the Moss Street Depot site excavated by FAS. Since some of these vessels were smashed there is no doubt that at least some of this activity consisted of settlement.

## Further Work

The majority of the pottery from the site is of types which are well known from various publications but there is a small amount of pottery which is unusual, either in fabric or form and it is recommended that these vessels are studied, using thin section and chemical analysis to characterise the fabrics and illustration to record the forms. These sherds are listed in Table 12 and amount to 14 line drawings, five thin sections, five chemical analyses and two Samian ware stamps which should be submitted to a specialist for identification and recording. A stamped clay tobacco pipe stem should also be submitted to a specialist for identification.

**Table 12**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Action</b>
4002	L1-2 (NATIVE WARE DR;TS;ICPS)	DR;TS;ICPS
4058	M12 3MED OR L3 79ROM INCLUDING SHERD COUNTER - DR (+4RTILCBM) 3BAGS	DR
4097	L3 (DR HAIR OF HEADPOT) 3BAGS	DR
4128	E12 3MED; 20 ROM (INCL 3 TRENT VALLEY WARE FOR TS;ICPS (2BAGS)	TS;ICPS
4154	M12 34MED; 18ROM (UNUSUAL YG DR) (+ROMAN MOULD) 2BAGS	2DR
4167	M12 10MED (1UNKOWN FAB TS ICPS); 5ROM 2BAGS	TS;ICPS
4187	L12; YG JUG DR; 56 MED/76 ROM (+18RTILCBM) 5BAGS	DR
4313	L12 44MED(+1MTILCBM); 83ROM; ROMAN STAMP 3BAGS	SPECIALIST
4340	L1+ (SAMIAN STAMP SPECILIALIST)	SPECIALIST
4352	M12 SHL=4393; 65MED;37ROM(+ 8RTILCBM) (3 YG VESSELS DR; DEC ONE TS;ICPS)	3DR; 1TS;1 ICPS
4393	M11 64MED (SHL=4352;BOWL DR)(COMPLETISH JAR DR) 19ROM(+8RTILCBM)	DR
4412	L1-2; INSCRIBED?	DR
4491	M11+ 1MED OR L3 50ROM (CARINATED JAR DR;TS;ICPS)	DR;TS;ICPS
4523	M3 (DR) (3BAGS)	DR
4567	E2; LID DR	DR
5049	18-19 PIPE STEM WITH DEC	SPECIALIST

A detailed record of the medieval pottery would not take long, because of the low number of sherds present, and would enable the site to be compared with other 12<sup>th</sup>-century sites in York and its suburbs. Similarly, a high proportion of the Roman pottery is residual in medieval deposits, although a decision has to be made about the interpretation of several assemblages which contain only a handful of medieval sherds alongside larger Roman assemblages. Once a site phasing has been established it can be used to select well-stratified assemblages which can be recorded to help establish the site function and dating during the Roman period.