

Assessment of the Pottery and Ceramic Building Material from Weaverthorpe Church, North Yorkshire (OSA06 EV08)

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A small collection of pottery and a single fragment of ceramic building material was recovered from an archaeological evaluation carried out at Weaverthorpe Church, North Yorkshire by On-Site Archaeology Ltd (Site Code: OSA06 EV08). The finds date from the mid 12th to the late 15th or 16th centuries.

Description

Ceramic Building Material

A single fragment of ceramic building material was recovered. It was a featureless lump, partly coated with mortar. Most probably, it is a fragment of brick of later medieval or later date. Examination of the fabric at x20 magnification suggests that the brick might have been made from boulder clay.

Pottery

York Gritty ware (YG)

A single fragment of York Gritty ware was recovered. The sherd is the rim of a jar and the rolled-out rim profile suggests a 12th or 13th century date. York Gritty ware was produced in West Yorkshire from Coal Measure light-firing clays and tempered with a coarse sand or gravel containing mainly quartz grains derived from Millstone Grit, together with sparse fragments of Millstone Grit-type sandstone.

Staxton-type ware (STAXT)

Sixteen sherds of Staxton-type ware were recovered. This ware is has a sandy texture and is usually oxidized, sometimes with a light grey core. Visual examination at x20 magnification suggests that these sherds might be from the Potter Brompton or Staxton potteries, situated at the foot of the chalk scarp in the Vale of Pickering, although this would need to be tested through thin section and chemical analysis. These industries are thought to have started around the middle of the 12th century, based on the excavations at Wharram Percy and Beverley (although the Staxton-type ware from the latter site was produced in or close to Beverley rather than the Vale of Pickering). It is suggested at Wharram Percy that the ware continued to be used into the 15th centuries. Most of the sherds come from jars but one sherd from a curfew was present. Curfews were large, handled, inverted bowls used to cover an open fire at night so that the embers would keep alight but no sparks could escape.

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

A copy of this report is archived online at

<http://www.avac.uklinux.net/potcat/pdfs/avac2006007.pdf>

York glazed ware (YORK)

A sherd of unglazed jar and a sherd from the neck of a glazed jug in York glazed ware were recovered. York glazed ware was first produced in the later 12th century and was replaced in the later 13th century by Brandsby-type ware, which lacks the added fine quartz sand found in York Glazed ware. Although no production sites are known, fabric analysis suggests that this ware was produced in the same area as Brandsby-type ware. The jug sherd comes from a vessel with a cylindrical ribbed neck, a form probably influenced by Rouen ware and therefore of very late 12th or early 13th century date.

Brandsby-type ware (BRAN)

A sherd of a Brandsby-type ware jug was recovered. The vessel has a fine-textured fabric with a dark grey core and interior and a copper-stained external glaze. This ware was produced at a number of sites in the Hambleton Hills from the late 13th to the 15th centuries and the reduced core of this sherd suggests a later 14th or 15th century date.

Humberware (HUM)

Four sherds of Humberware were recovered. Humberware is a regional pottery tradition which seems to have started in the late 13th or early 14th centuries and continued into the early 16th centuries. Several production centres are known from archaeological evidence (e.g. West Cowick, York, Holme upon Spalding Moor) and others can be inferred from fabric analysis (e.g. one in north-east Lincolnshire and one in the vicinity of Beverley). Visual examination of the fabric of these four sherds at x20 magnification suggests that all come from the same production site but does not allow that site to be identified, although probably it could be determined using thin section and chemical analysis.

Raeren Stoneware (RAER)

A single sherd from the thumbled base of a drinking jug of Raeren Stoneware was recovered. Raeren stoneware was exported to Eastern England in large quantities in the later 15th and early to mid 16th centuries.

Assessment

Trench 1

Eleven sherds were recovered from Trench 1 but all but one of these were unstratified. The stratified sherd comes from context 112, the fill of a grave, and dates to the mid 12th century or later.

Trench 2

Two sherds of Staxton-type ware were recovered from context 201, graveyard soil, dating it to the mid 12th century or later.

Trench 3

Nine sherds were recovered from Trench 3, six of which were stratified. These sherds came from contexts 303, 304, 314, 318, and 333. Context 333 also produced the fragment of ceramic building material. All these contexts are grave fills or graveyard soils and are mainly dated by the pottery to the mid 12th century or later. Context 303 produced a sherd of York ware jar which should date to the later 12th century or later. If the fragment of ceramic building material from context 333 is indeed brick then it ought to date to the later 14th century or later (probably much later). However, given the size of the fragment it could be intrusive as a result of animal burrowing.

Trench 4

Four sherds of pottery were recovered from Trench 4. Context 405, a grave fill, can be dated to the mid 12th century or later whilst context 403, the fill of a modern drain trench, contains a residual sherd of early 13th century York Glazed ware.

Dating and interpretation

The standard interpretations of artefacts found in medieval graveyard soils and grave fills are as follows:

- a) the finds are residual from pre-church activity on the site
- b) the finds are associated with activities taking place in the church or churchyard
- c) the finds were present in soil imported to the graveyard to raise the ground level

In the case of the Weaverthorpe finds there is evidence for earlier activity in the neighbourhood, but none of the finds is likely to pre-date the church. The presence of similar-dated pottery from all four trenches suggests that the graveyard level was heightened during the latter part of the 12th century through the importation of soil which incorporated domestic debris (cooking pots, a curfew and jugs). The only later finds were unstratified from Trench 1.

Further Work

The source of the Staxton-type ware and Humberware sherds is of interest and could be established through thin section and chemical analysis. However, it is difficult to see how this knowledge would aid interpretation of the Weaverthorpe site although it would establish the trading connections of this settlement during the medieval period.

Retention

All of the finds should be retained for potential future study.

Appendix 1

trench	Context	Cname	Form	class	Part	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Description	Use	Condition
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1	112	STAXT	JAR	POTTERY	BS	1	1	3			
2	201	STAXT	JAR	POTTERY	R	2	1	24	LID-SEATED		
3	303	YORK	JAR	POTTERY	BS	1	1	15			
3	304	STAXT	JAR	POTTERY	BS	1	1	20	HM		
3	314	STAXT?	JAR	POTTERY	BS	1	1	5	WT		ABR
3	318	STAXT	JAR	POTTERY	R	1	1	11		SOOTED EXT	ABR
3	333	STAXT	JAR	POTTERY	BS	1	1	1		SOOTED EXT	ABR
3	333	MTIL	BRICK?	CBM	BS	1	1	7		MORTARED FRAG	
4	403	YORK	JUG	POTTERY	BS	1	1	7	RIBBED NECK;EXT CUGL		
4	405	STAXT	JAR	POTTERY	BS	3	3	7			ABR
1	US	RAER	DJ	POTTERY	B	1	1	14			
1	US	HUM	JUG	POTTERY	BS	1	1	5	EXT PLAIN GL		
1	US	HUM	JUG	POTTERY	BS	1	1	9	EXT WHITE SLIPPED		
1	US	HUM	JUG	POTTERY	B	1	1	55	KT BASE ANGLE		
1	US	HUM	-	POTTERY	BS	1	1	36	INT PLAIN GL SPLASHES		
1	US	STAXT	JAR	POTTERY	BS	2	2	32	HM		
1	US	BRAN	JUG	POTTERY	BS	1	1	7	CUGL EXT;REDUCED CORE		
3	US	STAXT	JAR	POTTERY	BS	3	3	14			
1	US	YG	JAR	POTTERY	R	1	1	6	ROLLED-OUT RIM	SOOTED EXT	
1	US	STAXT	CURF	POTTERY	R	1	1	66	FLANGED RIM	SOOTED INT	