

Assessment of the Pottery from Towton, North Yorkshire (TOW'06)

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A small quantity of pottery from archaeological fieldwork carried out by Fern Archaeology was submitted to the authors for identification and assessment. The finds range in date from the late 13th to early 14th century (or possibly earlier) to the late 16th century or later.

Description

Ceramic building material

A single fragment of a glazed ridge tile was recorded. The fabric is not familiar to the authors (coded MEDLOC). Glazed ridge tiles were used from the later 12th century onwards but there does not seem to have been a tradition of glazed ridge tile use in the later medieval period in Yorkshire. This fragment is therefore probably of late 12th to mid 14th-century date.

Medieval pottery

Twenty three sherds of medieval pottery were recorded. They have a mean weight of 15gm. None of the sherds show any sign of abrasion and some are moderately large, ranging up to 59 gm. For comparison, the mean sherd weight for medieval pottery found in fieldwalking is close to 5gm.

Most of the sherds are of Northern Gritty ware (NGR), made from a light-firing, Coal Measures clay with a quartzose sand temper consisting of sandstone-derived quartz grains (Cumberpatch 2004). Similar fabrics were produced in a number of centres in West Yorkshire from the later 12th century onwards. In places, these fabrics continued to be produced into the late medieval period, contemporary with the Humberware production found in the Humber wetlands and Vale of York, but those examples are often fired to almost stoneware temperatures and so a later 12th to mid 14th-century date is likely for the Towton examples. The next most common fabric is Coal Measure Whiteware (CMW) of the over-fired type produced at Rawmarsh, South Yorkshire (37 miles south of Towton), in the later 15th and 16th centuries (Vince in Cumberpatch 2004). This ware was distributed using the Humber basin river network and examples are known, for example, from Kingston-upon-Hull. Alternatively, Towton lies close to the line of the Great North Road, and the Rawmarsh products may have been transported overland.

Four sherds of Humberware (HUM) were recorded. This ware was produced from a fine, silty, clay which occurs widely around the Humber basin (Hayfield 1992), and recently a kiln producing very similar-looking wares in the Humberware tradition was excavated in York

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(Vince and Steane 2005). The nearest known sources to Towton were at West Cowick (c.20 miles southeast of Towton) and York (12 miles to the northeast).

Finally, two sherds of North Yorkshire whitewares were recorded. One is a Brandsby-type ware (BRAN, Alan Vince 2004; 1978; Jennings 1992) and the other Scarborough ware (SCAR). Both come from jugs produced in the later 13th century or later (as shown by the presence of Scarborough at Hull, Watkins 1982). Both of these types probably arrived at Towton via York.

Both jars and jugs were present in the collection and one of the NGR jars has sooting on the exterior.

Post-medieval pottery

Two sherds of 16th-century or later date were present. One is a Cistercian ware cup (CSTN) and the other a glazed red earthenware bowl (GRE). Both types could have been current in the 16th century although CSTN is now thought to have been introduced during the 15th century (A Boyle, pers comm) and glazed red earthenware continued to be produced into the 18th or 19th centuries.

Stratigraphy

Table 1 lists the pottery types by context and gives the earliest possible date for the deposition of each group. However, since no context produced more than 4 sherds and most of the wares have a long period of use these dates could be centuries earlier than the actual deposition dates.

Nevertheless, the pottery does indicate that there was activity on the site from at the very latest the early 14th century through to the late 16th century.

Table 1

Context	NGR	CMW	HUM	BRAN	SCAR	MEDLOC	TPQ
C1001	1					1	13th C +
C1006		1					15th C +
C1010		2					15th C +
C1011		2	1				15th C +
C1014	2						12th C +
C1019	1		1				14th C +
C1025	1						12th C +
C1028	2		2				14th C +
C1035	3					1	12th C +
U/S	2			1			NA

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Appendix 1

Context	class	REFNO	Cname	Subfabric	Form	Part	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Use
C1010	POTTERY	38	CMW	RAWMARSH	JAR	BS	2	2	4	
C1006	POTTERY	23	CSTN		CUP	H	1	1	4	
C1019	POTTERY	32	HUM		JUG/JAR	BS	1	1	4	
C1001	POTTERY	21	SCAR		JUG	BS	1	1	7	
U/S	POTTERY	16	BRAN		JUG	BS	1	1	8	
C1011	POTTERY	34	HUM		JUG/JAR	BS	1	1	8	
U/S	POTTERY	16	NGR		JUG	BS	1	1	8	
C1025	POTTERY	20	NGR		JUG	BS	1	1	10	
U/S	POTTERY	16	NGR		JAR	BS	1	1	11	
C1001	POTTERY	21	NGR		JUG	BS	1	1	12	
C1028	POTTERY	25	NGR		JUG	R;BS	2	2	12	
C1028	POTTERY	25	HUM		JUG/JAR	BS	2	2	15	
C1019	POTTERY	32	NGR		JAR	BS	1	1	20	
C1014	POTTERY	26	NGR		JAR	BS	2	2	21	
C1035	POTTERY	28	NGR		JAR	B	3	1	32	SOOTED EXT
C1011	POTTERY	34	CMW	RAWMARSH	JAR	BS	2	2	40	

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C1035	CBM	27	MEDLOC		RIDGE	BS	1	1	57
C1006	POTTERY	23	CMW	RAWMARSH	JAR	BS	1	1	59
C1003	POTTERY	19	GRE		PANC	R	1	1	61