

Assessment of the Pottery from Skipwith, North Yorkshire (SKI'06)

Alan Vince and Kate Steane

A small collection of pottery from archaeological fieldwork carried out by Fern Archaeology at Skipwith, North Yorkshire, was submitted to the authors for identification and assessment.

The finds consist of medieval and post-medieval pottery, ranging in date from the late 11th/12th century through to the 18th century.

Description

The pottery is listed in Appendix 1. The codes used are explained in the text.

Medieval Pottery

Seventeen sherds of medieval pottery were recorded. All are of types known from York (1978; Jennings 1992).

The most common type present is a Staxton-type ware (STAXT), represented by 8 sherds, from 3 different contexts and probably coming from three different jars. Staxton and Potter Brompton, in the southeast corner of the Vale of Pickering, were producing pottery from the late 12th onwards. The end-date of the Staxton ware tradition in the Vale of Pickering is uncertain and at Wharram Percy it has been suggested that the ware continued to be produced into the late medieval period (Le Patourel 1979). However, outside of that area the ware appears to be restricted to the late 12th to 13th centuries.

Recently, a series of analyses of Staxton-type ware from sites in Yorkshire and Cleveland have been undertaken (Vince 2004). These analyses have shown that Staxton-type ware is a potting tradition and that there were production sites making wares of similar form in the Tees Valley (Hartlepool Staxton-type ware and East Cleveland ware); in the Beverley area (Beverley Staxton-type ware) and in the southwest part of the Yorkshire Wolds (Fabric code QC). The Skipwith examples when examined at x20 magnification using a binocular microscope have a silty, micaceous groundmass which is most similar to the Beverley Staxton-type ware, despite the proximity of the site to the southwest corner of the Wolds.

The next most common type is Northern Gritty ware (NGR), represented by 4 sherds, two from jars and two from jugs. This ware was produced at a number of sites in West Yorkshire from the late 12th to the 14th century or later (Vince 2005).

Three sherds of York Gritty ware were present (YG). This ware was also produced in West Yorkshire, but has a lower iron content and coarse temper than NGR. It was the major ware used in York in the late 11th century, and is found in the construction levels of York Minster

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/avac2006129.pdf>

(Holdsworth 1995). The ware was probably still being made in the mid 13th century, however, and there is at present no way to distinguish early from late products.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

The final sherd is a strap handle from a glazed vessel of Beverley-type Glazed ware (BEVOT2B, Figs 1 to 3). At first glance, the fabric of this vessel looks like Beverley glazed ware, produced at Beverley from the mid 12th to the mid 13th century (e.g. Watkins 1991; Didsbury and Watkins 1992). However, under x20 magnification the fabric is seen to be more

similar to vessels found in York and grouped together as York Splashed ware. Recently, a series of samples of these York glazed wares were analysed for York Archaeological Trust using thin section and chemical analysis (Alan Vince 2004). This analysis indicated that they were probably produced in the Vale of York, perhaps in York itself or its suburbs. The handle, however, stands out from these vessels:

- a) it was produced on the wheel as a cylinder of clay which was then cut in two to form two handles. This is a method of manufacture employed in Carolingian France in the 9th century and introduced to England by the Stamford potters (Kilmurry 1977). From there (or by direct influence from the continent), the technique spread to other English industries but was replaced by other methods of handle manufacture in the 13th century. This would suggest that the Skipwith piece is of 13th century or earlier date.
- b) The size and curvature of the handle suggest that it comes from a pitcher with a wide mouth, as opposed to a jug. Pitchers were produced at Stamford and rare examples are found in the late 11th/early 12th-century splashed ware industries, such as those at Nottingham and Lincoln (Young and Vince 2006). Close examination of the Skipwith handle suggests that the top of the surviving handle is close to the rim join and that a piece of added clay present at the top end was added to lute the handle to the rim.
- c) The glaze does not appear to be splashed but has the glossy smooth appearance of suspension glazes. This might either indicate that the vessel is actually of late 12th/13th century date or that it was copying 12th-century Stamford ware vessels, some of which have a similar glossy glaze (although in those cases it is a yellow colour).

It is possible, therefore, that the handle is of early to mid 12th century date and a product of a York-based glazed ware industry.

Post-medieval Pottery

A single sherd of press-moulded Staffordshire slipware dish (STCO) was recorded. The vessel, which is of early to mid 18th-century date has soot on the underside and has probably used as a pie dish.

Assessment

Although a small collection, the Skipwith finds are of some interest. They may include material of early to mid 12th century date. The similarity of the Staxton-type ware to that produced at Beverley may indicate the use of the predecessor of the A163 to Market Weighton and Beverley. They also include vessels of West Yorkshire origin (NGR) which are rare in York, suggesting that contact with West Yorkshire was direct rather than through York.

Three contexts produced pottery and these all contain late 12th-century or later types. The lack of Humberware from the site, given the proximity of production sites at York and Holme-upon-Spalding Moor, suggests that the sites was not occupied later than the mid 14th century. However, the size of the ceramic assemblage is too small to state this dogmatically.

Retention

The finds should be retained for future study.

Further Work

The BEVOT2B handle should be drawn and photographed. One of the STAXT jar rims should also be drawn.

Appendix 1

Action	Context	REFNO	Cname	Description	Form	Part	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Use
	C1003	4	NGR		JAR	BS	1	1	2	
	C1003	4	NGR		JUG	BS	1	1	6	
	C1003	4	STAXT		JAR	BS	2	2	9	SOOTED EXT
DR	C1003	4	STAXT		JAR	R;BS	5	1	47	
	C1004	6	YG		JAR	BS	1	1	3	SOOTED EXT
	C1004	6	YG		JAR	BS	2	1	9	
	C1004	6	STAXT		JAR	BS	1	1	11	SOOTED EXT
	C1004	6	NGR		JUG	R	1	1	12	
	C1021	10	NGR		JAR	BS	1	1	14	
	U/S	2	STCO	FEATHERED	DISH	BS	1	1	9	SOOTED EXT
DR	U/S	1	BEVOT2B	WHEELTHROWN STRAP HANDLE, DULL GLAZE	JUG	H	1	1	46	

Bibliography

Didsbury, P. and Watkins, G. (1992) "The Pottery." in D. H. Evans and D. G. Tomlinson, eds., *Excavations at 33-35 Eastgate, Beverley, 1983-86*, Sheffield Excavation Reps 3 J R Collis Publ, Sheffield, 81-120

Holdsworth, J. (1978) *Selected pottery groups AD 650-1780*, Council British Archaeol, London

Holdsworth, J. (1995) "6.2 Post-Roman pottery ." in D. Phillips and B. Heywood, eds., *Excavations at York Minster*, HMSO, London,

Jennings, Sarah (1992) *Medieval Pottery in the Yorkshire Museum*. York, The Yorkshire Museum

- Kilmurry, K. (1977) "The production of red-painted pottery at Stamford, Lincs." *Medieval Archaeol*, XXI, 180-6
- Le Patourel, J. (1979) "Medieval Pottery." in D. D. Andrews and G. Milne, eds., *Wharram: a study of settlement on the Yorkshire wolds. Vol 1, Domestic settlement, 1: Areas 10 and 6*, Soc Medieval Archaeol Monogr Ser 8 Soc Medieval Archaeol, 74-107
- Vince, Alan (2004) *Characterisation studies of medieval coarsewares from Wawne, East Yorkshire (OSA02 EX02)*. AVAC Reports 2004/21 Lincoln, Alan Vince Archaeology Consultancy
- Alan Vince (2004) *Characterisation Studies of Medieval Glazed Wares from York*. AVAC Reports 2004/151 Lincoln, Alan Vince Archaeology Consultancy
- Vince, Alan (2005) *Characterisation Studies of locally-produced Wares from the A1, near Wetherby*. AVAC Reports 2004/54 Lincoln, Alan Vince Archaeology Consultancy
- Watkins, G. (1991) "The Pottery." in P. T. D. Armstrong and D. H. Evans, eds., *Excavations at Lurk Lane Beverley, 1979-82*, Sheffield Excavation Rep 1 J R Collis Publ , Sheffield, 61-103
- Young, Jane and Vince, Alan (2006) *A Corpus of Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Pottery from Lincoln*. Lincoln Archaeological Reports Oxford, Oxbow