

The Pottery from Leppington, North Yorkshire

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A total of 745 sherds of pottery, representing no more than 663 vessels and weighing 9774 gm was recovered from the excavations. The sherds include one fresh sherd of Roman pottery, a mortaria rim, indicating activity nearby during the Roman period, but with that exception the first pottery present probably dates to the late 12th century or early 13th century. There is then a scatter of later medieval and early post-medieval pottery but essentially the collection consists of material from a short-lived occupation.

Catalogue

Roman

A single sherd of Roman pottery was recovered. It is the rim of a Mancetter-Hartshill mortaria of 2nd-century date (Monaghan 1997, 932-4, Fig 371 Nos. 3369-73) and shows little sign of abrasion.

Medieval wares

Most of the medieval pottery from the site is of types which are well-known from sites in North Yorkshire, especially from York itself (1978; Jennings 1992). However, it became clear during analysis that the collection included a number of fabrics which could not be reliably attributed to any known group without further analysis. These have been given the provisional fabric codes of Leppington Fabrics 1 to 4.

York Gritty ware

York Gritty ware has a fine-textured off-white fabric and is tempered with moderate quantities of a coarse quartzose sand. At x20 magnification these grits can be seen to consist of overgrown quartz grains with, often, kaolinite filling of pores. Haematite coating is rare although haematite rich iron/clay compounds are present. Coarse, laminated fragments of white-firing mudstone or shale up to several mm across are often visible.

This fabric is ubiquitous in the later 11th to early 13th centuries in the southern parts of the Vale of York and Humber wetlands and was probably produced in West Yorkshire, utilising Coal Measure seatearths and a river gravel composed mainly of Millstone Grit-derived quartz. Excavations at York Minster established that this ware was in use in the late 11th century and is the main ware type found in the construction levels of the Norman minster (Holdsworth 1995). This early starting date is confirmed by the sequence at Coppergate (Mainman 1990). However, identical vessels continue to occur in medieval assemblages, in York and elsewhere, into the early 13th century, and perhaps even later.

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Fifty sherds of this ware were present at Leppington, all from jars. Eight rim sherds were found, all of the standard squared form. None of the sherds showed any signs of abrasion and all were of similar size and condition to the remaining medieval pottery. It is likely, therefore, that they are contemporary with the other medieval pottery, i.e. of later 12th to early 13th-century date rather than representing an earlier phase of occupation. However, they concentrate in two features which are probably the earliest on the site (see below, Phase 1a, Table 3).

Staxton-type ware

The majority of the unglazed medieval vessels from the site were Staxton-type ware jars. Staxton-type wares were made by hand but their top halves were then finished off on a wheel, giving a distinctive appearance to body sherds of the ware. Most share a limited range of rim forms.

Several sources of Staxton-type ware are known. Some are known through the discovery of production waste, as at Staxton and Potter Brompton, both situated at the foot of the Wolds in the east end of the Vale of Pickering, and, probably North Newbald, also located on the scarp of the Wolds to the south of Market Weighton. Other sources can be inferred through fabric analysis. Samples from Hartlepool have a similar fabric to other wares of Cleveland origin whilst samples from sites in East Yorkshire, such as Wawne and Beverley, have a fabric similar to that of 12th-century Beverley wares (Vince 2004).

The fabric of the Leppington examples contains abundant ill-sorted quartz sand. Most of the grains are rounded and include examples with a haematite coating, polished grains, grains with overgrowth and spherical grains with a matt surface. Sparse rounded red-brown iron-rich grains up to 0.3mm across are also present. Angular fragments of flint up to 1.0mm across are also present, but rare. The groundmass is fine-textured apart from abundant laths of muscovite, mostly less than 0.1mm across. These characteristics are similar to the products of the Staxton and Potter Brompton centres, about 23 miles to the east of Leppington.

Most of the Staxton ware sherds come from jars but a few come from "peat pots", vessels with the same rim form and upper body profile as the jars but much shallower and, consequently with an acute angled base. Four of the 42 base sherds are of this form.

The rims are mostly of types known from Wharram Percy (Le Patourel 1979) and Table 1 lists the types with close parallels. In addition, twelve rims were not closely paralleled at Wharram. Four of these have a flat, inward sloping top and internal bead (DR 9 and DR 1 and two not illustrated). Four have flat, inward-sloping rims without the bead (DR10 and DR22 and two not illustrated). One has the squared collar rim which is typical of York Gritty ware (DR16). One has a lid-seated rim (DR21) and the last is from a much finer-potted vessel with an everted rim (DR2).

Le Patourel suggested that Staxton ware at Wharram Percy was used from the 12th to the 14th or 15th centuries. Elsewhere, however, it is rare to find sherds outside of late 12th to early 13th-century contexts and as a major regional producer of pottery it is likely that Staxton/Potter Brompton operated only in that short period.

Table 1

Le Patourel Parallel	No
FIG 45, NO 100	3
FIG 45, NO 095	2
FIG 45, NO 096	1
FIG 46, NO 110 WITH EXT THUMBING	1
FIG 47, NO 101	2
FIG 47, NO 102	1
FIG 47, NO 103	2
FIG 48, NO 105	3
FIG 48, NO 106	1
FIG 48, NO 107	1
FIG 48, NO 108	1
FIG 49, NO 112	2
FIG 49, NO 112 BUT SQUATTER RIM WITH EXT THUMBING	1
FIG 51, NO116 ONLY MORE SQUAT	1
FIG 52, NO 119	1
SIMILAR TO RIM TYPE 3, FIG 33	1
SIMILAR TO RIM TYPE 3, FIG 33, MORE EXTENDED WITH A FLAT TOP	1
SIMILAR TO RIM TYPE 3, FIG 33, ONLY MORE EXTENDED	7
SIMILAR TO RIM TYPE 3, FIG 33, ONLY SQUATTER	1
SIMILAR TO RIM TYPE 8, FIG 33 BUT WITH MORE OF A SQUARE RIM	1
SIMILAR TO DR 10	1
SIMILAR TO DR 10 EXCEPT SQUATTER	1
SIMILAR TO DR 9	1
SIMILAR TO DR1	1
SIMILAR TO DR22, BUT SMALLER	1

Apart from the two thumbled rims noted in Table 1, a single decorated sherd was present. This is a body sherd from a jar with a vertical applied, thumbled strip.

North Yorkshire Whitewares

The white-firing clays of the Middle Jurassic have been utilised for pottery production in the Roman period (Crambeck ware) and again in the later 13th century to 16th centuries (Brandsby-type ware; Hambleton ware and Ryedale ware, Jennings 1992). Kilns and dumps of wasters have been found in several villages in the Hambleton Hills and, recently, at Castle Howard (Hambleton ware).

Analysis of the fabric of samples of pottery from kilns at Brandsby and Stearsby and comparison with a range of whiteware samples from excavations in York has shown that York Glazed ware, although not yet known from any kiln site or waster deposit, is almost certainly a North Yorkshire whiteware utilising the same clay.

The Leppington site produced 74 sherds of York Glazed ware, from no more than 59 vessels, but in addition produced sherds of two distinct whiteware fabrics, here termed Leppington Fabrics 1 and 3. It is more than likely that these are also products of the Hambleton Hills industry but they have been treated separately here since they do not occur with any frequency in York and may be products of a more local industry (since the Middle Jurassic clays outcrop a few miles to the east of Leppington).

York Glazed ware

York Glazed ware is distinguishable from the later Brandsby-type ware because it contains abundant fine quartz sand, which gives it a distinct texture. Under x20 magnification, the quartz sand is seen to consist of subangular grains, often coated with haematite.

Most of the sherds come from jugs with an external plain or copper-mottled lead glaze (55 sherds from no more than 40 vessels). In a few cases the glaze is splashed, a technique which appears to be restricted to the 12th century. 14 sherds from no more than 7 vessels were decorated. The decoration consists of stamps (Fig 1); combing (DR11), rectangular-toothed roller-stamping and applied strips. Applied strips and roller-stamping appear on glazed jugs in the early 13th century. The stamped strap handle has a plain glaze and is reminiscent of a series of jugs from Pontefract Priory, discussed by John Hurst who suggested a mid 12th century date and Stamford source.



Figure 1 York Glazed ware jug handle with stamped decoration (C1005)

Eighteen sherds come from jars, including three rims and six bases.

Most of the jar sherds show signs of use, either in the form of sooting on the exterior or internal deposits. However, traces of use were also found on jugs. Eleven sherds had a grey or light brown internal deposit and thirteen had sooting. Unlike the jar sherds, the soot was restricted to the underside of the base and the first centimetre or so of the sides. A good example is DR11, which is a decorated vessel. This is probably evidence that the vessels were heated on a brazier or griddle, perhaps to mull wine or create a posset, rather than set in the embers of a fire like the jars.



Figure 2 York Glazed ware ridge tile (C1001)

A single glazed ridge tile in York Glazed ware was present (Fig 2). The tile had an applied crest cut with a knife.

Leppington Fabric 1

Leppington Fabric 1 contains abundant quartz sand, similar to that found in York Glazed ware but including larger grains up to 1.0mm across. Several of the larger grains are of a red sandstone. The groundmass is fine-textured, apart from sparse to moderate flakes of muscovite up to 0.1mm across. Where oxidised, the groundmass has a pink colour with sparse lenses of lighter colour.

The 122 sherds (114 vessels) all come from wheelthrown jars, including 10 rims. Most of the rims were squared but vary in size and profile (DR8, DR4, DR19, DR3, DR20 and DR13).

Two, however, are simple rounded rims from vessels with no sharp neck angle (DR7 and DR15).

Most of the sherds are sooted (86 out of 122 sherds) and 16 have internal deposits, ranging from black to grey and white.

Leppington Fabric 3

This fabric has a similar appearance in the hand to LEP1 but under x20 magnification the groundmass is seen to be highly micaceous. Several samples of Brandsby-type ware are either highly micaceous or include highly micaceous lenses and it is very likely that this is simply a variant of LEP1. However, it is so distinct that examples have been separated out.

Eighteen sherds were present, representing no more than 16 vessels. All come from wheelthrown jars. Seven sherds were sooted.

Brandsby-type ware

Brandsby-type ware has a similar groundmass to York Glazed ware and to LEP1 and LEP3 but contains much less quartz sand, although it is rarely completely sand-free.

Fifteen sherds were present at Leppington, from no more than 8 vessels. All were jugs apart from one indeterminate sherd. One vessel has iron-rich vertical applied strips and horizontal applied strips. One vessel is similar to an example in Yorkshire Museum (Jennings 1992, No.94). The only other featured sherd is from a pulled spout.

Scarborough ware

Two sherds of Scarborough ware were recorded. There is little difference in fabric between these and the Brandsby-type ware but the glaze is much thicker and even in colour. Both sherds come from jugs. One sherd is featureless and the other is from a rod handle, 27mm wide with four vertical grooves running down the back.

Leppington Fabric 2

Leppington Fabric 2 contains mixed sand inclusions which consist of subangular brown and black rock fragments up to 2.0mm across, subangular chert fragments, rounded, matt-surfaced quartz grains, subangular quartz grains, some brown-coated, rounded red-brown clay/iron grains. The groundmass is fine-textured with a higher iron content than the North Yorkshire whitewares (Munsell 5YR 6/6 – reddish yellow).

Eighteen sherds of this fabric were present, coming from no more than 16 vessels. Two were definitely from wheelthrown jugs and 10 from wheelthrown jars. Only three sherds could be illustrated: the rim of a jug with a squared rim and external splashed glaze (DR17); the rim of a globular-bodied jar with a lid-seated rim (DR14) and a flat-topped rim from a large jar. The jug rim form and the splashed glaze both point to a 12th-century date whilst the lid-seated rim is likely to be of later 12th-century or later date.

Red Sandy ware

Five sherds of red sandy ware were present, representing 4 vessels. Three were jugs and the fourth the handle of a pipkin (DR23) with and external plain lead glaze and a white slip on both external and internal surfaces.

Non-local wares

Leppington Fabric 4

This fabric contains few inclusions visible to the naked eye. At x20 magnification abundant subangular and angular quartz is visible, usually with a brown coating. The groundmass is fine-textured and micaceous (Munsell 7.5YR 7/6 – reddish yellow).

The 42 sherds of this fabric, representing no more than 38 vessels, include wheelthrown jugs (26 sherds) and jars (11 sherds). The jugs have many features characteristic of Beverley glazed ware, especially that made in the later 12th/early 13th centuries (J Young, pers comm) but at x20 magnification the groundmass appears to be too fine-textured and is more similar to splashed ware and suspension-glazed vessels from York which chemical analysis suggests could be of local, i.e. Vale of York origin.

The Leppington examples include the rim of a splash-glazed jug (DR18) and part of a plain lead-glazed face jug in which the beard is attached to the shoulder of the pot and the body is decorated with vertical red strips (probably coloured by hammer scale) which had notched decoration, probably applied with a roller stamp (DR11).

Developed Stamford ware

A single sherd of Developed Stamford ware jug was present. This ware is distinguished by its extremely fine white body and copper-mottled green glaze. Developed Stamford ware was produced in the later 12th and early 13th centuries at Stamford and was widely traded to Yorkshire and elsewhere.

Beverley-type Glazed Ware

Four sherds from two jugs of Beverley glazed ware were recorded. Both have a fine micaceous silty fabric and are likely to be Beverley products rather than local copies. Neither vessel was decorated by the fine fabric and suspension glaze indicate a later 12th-century or later date.

Unidentified

A single sherd from a glazed jug with an external white slip was recorded. The fabric is fine-textured and highly micaceous. The colour, however, distinguishes this from LEP3. The sherd has an internal deposit.

Later Medieval and early Post-medieval wares

A handful of later medieval and early post-medieval sherds were present at Leppington. All are of types well known from excavations in York: Humberware; Blackware; Frechen stoneware; Glazed Red Earthenware and Ryedale ware (Table 2, 1978; Brooks 1987).

Table 2

cname	BOWL	DJ	JUG/JAR	PANC	Grand Total
HUM			5		5
RYEDALE	5		1		6
BL				1	1
FREC		1			1
GRE	2				2
Grand Total	7	1	6	1	15

Later Post-medieval and Modern wares

A single sherd of Nottingham stoneware jar was recovered. Nottingham stoneware was first produced in the late 17th century but is particularly common in Yorkshire in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Stratigraphy

Phase 1a

Pottery was recovered from five contexts assigned to Phase 1a: Ditch 1004; Ditch 1006; Ditch 1018; Gully 1014 and post-hole 1012 (Table 3). There are odd sherds of late 13th-century or later date in several of the features (Table 3 hmed, lmed, and pmed) and the dating therefore has to be made on the basis of the best fit of the evidence.



Figure 3 Gully 1014



Figure 4 Ditch 1004, C1016. York Gritty ware



Figure 5 Ditch 1004, C1003, LEP2 splash-glazed jug



Figure 6 Ditch 1004, York Gritty ware (left 3) and LEP2 splash-glazed ware (right 3)

Pottery of potentially Saxo-Norman date (YG) is present in three features and the relative proportion of this ware to others might suggest that the filling of Ditch 1004 and Gully 1014 pre-dated that of ditch 1006, which contains a large quantity of late 12th/early 13th century pottery. Neither of the early features contains any York glazed ware and a mid 12th century date is possible for their fills. The sherds are also smaller than those in ditch 1006 (Figs.3-6). Post-hole 1012 produced a single sherd of York glazed ware jar and is probably of late 12th century or later date.

Table 3

context group	emed	hmed	lmed	pmed	sn/emed	rom	Grand Total
Ditch 1004	6				7		13
Ditch 1006	485	3	1		26	1	516
Ditch 1018				1			1
Gully 1014	1				6		7
PH 1012	1						1
Grand Total	493	3	1	1	39	1	538

Phase 1a/1b

Pit 1010 produced a collection of late 12th to early 13th century pottery with a handful of later types (Table 4). The presence of some decorated York glazed ware sherds suggests an early 13th-century date.

Table 4

context group	cname	emed	hmed	lmed	sn/emed	Grand Total
Pit 1010	BRAN		1			1
	HUM			1		1
	LEP1	13				13
	LEP2	1				1
	LEP3	2				2
	LEP4	16				16
	RED SANDY	2				2
	STAXT	50				50
	YG				2	2
	YORK	10				10
Pit 1010 Total		94	1	1	2	98
Grand Total		94	1	1	2	98

The phase 1a and 1a/1b features can be grouped into two sub-phases: the earlier sub-phase consists of ditch 1004 and gully 1018 and the later of ditch 1006, pit 1010 and posthole 1012.

Phase 1b

The subsoil produced a collection of pottery most of which is of types current in Phase 1a but the proportion of later 13th-century and later sherds is higher.

Table 5

context group	cname	emed	hmed	lmed	pmed	sn/emed	Grand Total
subsoil	BEVO2B	1					1
	BRAN		11				11
	HUM			2			2
	LEP1	24					24
	LEP2	7					7
	LEP4	6					6
	MEDX	1					1
	RYEDALE				4		4
	SCAR		1				1
	STAXT	27					27
	YG					9	9
	YORK	14					14
subsoil Total		80	12	2	4	9	107
Grand Total		80	12	2	4	9	107

Phase 2

The topsoil produced a small collection of pottery of mixed date. The proportion of late medieval and later pottery is higher than in the previous phases but the majority of the sherds are still of late 12th to 13th-century types.

Table 6

context group	cname	emed	emod	hmed	lmed	pmed	Grand Total
topsoil	BL					1	1
	BRAN			1			1
	FREC					1	1
	GRE					2	2
	HUM				1		1
	LEP1	1					1
	LEP2	5					5
	NOTS		1				1
	RED SANDY	3					3
	RYEDALE					1	1
	STAXT	1					1
	YORK	1					1
topsoil Total		11	1	1	1	5	19
Grand Total		11	1	1	1	5	19

Discussion

It is presumed, as suggested by the excavator, that the site was occupied in Phase 1a, that phase 1b consists of occupation debris of Phase 1a contaminated by later pottery introduced by ploughing and that any pottery types found in the topsoil, phase 2, but not in earlier phases was discarded after that ploughing ceased.

On this interpretation, the site was occupied in the mid 12th to early 13th centuries and was then subjected to ploughing in the later 13th to 16th centuries. The paucity of 17th century and later pottery suggests that ploughing ceased during the 16th century.

Date

The two features with a high percentage of York Gritty ware present probably date to the mid 12th century (Table 7). Only one illustrated sherd came from these features, DR15.

Table 7

context group	LEP1	LEP2	LEP2?	STAXT	YG	Grand Total
Ditch 1004	1	3		2	7	13
Gully 1014			1		6	7
Percent	5%	15%	5%	10%	65%	20

Ditch 1006 produced the only other large stratified assemblage, of early 13th century date (Table 8). Table 8 excludes definite residual Roman and intrusive later medieval and later sherds but retains the sherds of Brandsby-type and Scarborough ware, which if contemporary could place the filling of the ditch in the mid 13th century. Several of the illustrated sherds come from this ditch fill (DR1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21).

Table 8

	BEVO2B	BRAN	DEVS	LEP1	LEP2	LEP3	LEP4	SCAR	STAXT	YG	YORK	Grand Total
Ditch 1006	3	2	1	83	19	16	20	1	295	26	48	514

Percent	0.58%	0.39%	0.19%	16.15%	3.70%	3.11%	3.89%	0.19%	57.39%	5.06%	9.34%	100.00%
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Pottery Supply

If the difference in assemblages between Ditch 1004 and Gully 1014 on the one hand and Ditch 1006 on the other is due to date, as seems likely, then the two groups reflect the emergence of the North Yorkshire Whiteware industry and the growth of the Staxton/Potter Brompton industry, both at the expense of the West Yorkshire York Gritty industry. Both groups indicate that Leppington was not reliant solely on a single local source for its pottery and the contrast with the sequence in York makes it clear that the occupants of Leppington were not solely obtaining their pottery via York.

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