

## **Assessment of Pottery from Swillington, West Yorkshire (SWI06)**

### ***Alan Vince***

An archaeological watching brief carried out at Swillington, West Yorkshire produced sherds of an unusual Anglo-Saxon or early Medieval handmade vessel (Vince 2006). The date of this vessel could not be determined from internal evidence, since no good parallels were known. Subsequent fieldwork revealed further pottery which clarifies the date of the previously-assessed material, since that material is stratigraphically later than a feature which produced pottery of 10<sup>th</sup>-century date.

### **Description**

#### **Anglo-Scandinavian**

Fragments of two vessels of York A ware (Mainman 1990; 1978) were found together with a single sherd of York Gritty ware.

Vessel 1 consists of 59 sherds comprising most of the base and about a third of the rim and sides of a jar. The base is flat but shows no sign of wheelthrowing or removal from the wheel. The lower body of the vessel also shows little or no sign of wheelthrowing but the shoulder and rim are clearly wheelthrown and show the ripple marks caused by the tension between the wheel and the potter's hands. It is not clear whether the pot was entirely thrown on the wheel and then the base reworked after removal from the wheel or whether a coil-built body was trued-up and finished on the wheel but it is possible that after reconstruction side-lighting and further study would establish the method of manufacture more clearly. X-radiography of the walls and base might also reveal the manufacturing method. The rim form is triangular and closely paralleled by vessels from Coppergate, York, dated by their Period 4 context to the mid 10<sup>th</sup> century (Mainman 1990, Fig 00 Nos. 00). The vessel has soot on the exterior from the underside of the base to the rim.

Vessel 2 consists of four sherds of a wheelthrown jar which provide a profile from the base to the shoulder. The base has been knife trimmed together with the lower 10mm of the wall.

Both vessels were oxidized and in places have a light grey core but vessel 2 is less reduced than vessel 1 and consequently has a lighter colour, 10YR 7/4 (very pale brown) as opposed to 7.5YR 7/6 (reddish yellow) for Vessel 1.

The fabric of both vessels is tempered with a well-sorted quartzose sand between c.0.5 and 1.0mm across with rounded brown mudstone fragments up to 5.0mm across. The groundmass is fine-textured with a micaceous sheen.

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Recent analysis of material from the Coppergate and Fishergate excavations in York and from the production site at Thorne has demonstrated that the Thorne site was producing York A ware and therefore dates between the later 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries (Cumberpatch and Roberts 1998-1999; Vince 2004). Chemical analysis indicates that the pottery contains a very high frequency of barium, probably as a result of the inclusion of vein barytes in the sand.

### **Medieval**

A sherd of York Gritty was found in the same feature fill as the two York A ware sherds whilst single sherds were also recovered from two other features. York Gritty ware was produced from Coal Measure whiteware clay, often marbled with lenses of redder colour, and was tempered with a coarse gravel, composed of similar quartz and sandstone grains to those found in York A ware but ranging up to 3.0mm across. Although there is no archaeological evidence as yet for the location of the kilns producing this ware it is very likely that Potterton was one of the production sites, since it has a potting place name mentioned in Domesday and this ware was in use in York by the late 11<sup>th</sup> century (Holdsworth 1995). However, York Gritty ware was also used throughout the 12<sup>th</sup> and into the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries and no features yet allow the vessels to be closely dated.

### **Assessment**

The material from 18/108 includes two smashed vessels one of which can be closely paralleled in a mid 10<sup>th</sup>-century context in York. The other can also be broadly dated to the late 9<sup>th</sup> to early 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. The sherd of York Gritty ware from the same context might therefore either be intrusive from a mid 11<sup>th</sup>-century or later deposit, indicate that the filling took place over a century or more or perhaps indicate that York Gritty ware was produced before the Norman Conquest. However, at present the most likely context for York Gritty ware is in the decades following the conquest, since the rim form of York Gritty jars appears to have Norman parallels.

The previously-assessed vessel, from 18/101 and 18/102, is apparently stratigraphically later than 18/108 and therefore probably a late 11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> century handmade vessel rather than an early to mid Anglo-Saxon vessel. As such it extends the known range of such vessels which are known in Lincolnshire and East Yorkshire but not West Yorkshire. Handmade wares, including glazed vessels, were produced in South Yorkshire, at Doncaster Market Place, probably in the mid 12<sup>th</sup> century (Buckland and Hayfield 1989).

Despite the location of the Thorne kiln in West Yorkshire, finds of York A ware are rare in the countryside and it had been surmised that the main market for this kiln site was York itself. The Swillington finds join a single vessel from Ingmanthorpe Manor (Vince 2005) and suggest that there may be a greater rural pottery use in 10<sup>th</sup> century West Yorkshire than otherwise supposed. Swillington is less than 10 miles to the south of Thorne, however, and Ingmanthorpe is about 10 miles to the north and it may be that in addition to its major market

in York the Thorner products were traded directly from the production site for a short distance.

### **Further Work**

The identity of the three vessels from 18/108 should be confirmed through thin section and chemical analysis. The vessels should be reconstructed, ideally professionally to a standard suitable for museum display, otherwise temporarily using tape so that they can be photographed and illustrated, and a report for publication produced.

### **Costing**

Until April 2007, thin section analysis is costed at £24.00 plus VAT per sample and chemical analysis, is also costed at £24.00 plus VAT.

A report on the pottery listed in Appendix 1 incorporating the results of thin section and chemical analysis and suitable for publication would take half a day, £96.00 plus VAT.

Costs for illustration and reconstruction have not been obtained but an hour would be required to liaise and check the drawings.

Total: £240.00 plus VAT

### **Bibliography**

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*Appendix 1*

DN NO	Context	Action	class	Cname	Description	Form	Part	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Use
0	18/108	ICPS	POTTERY	YG	CYLINDRICAL WALLED	JAR	BS	1	1	11	SOOTED EXT
1	18/108	DR;ICPS;TS	POTTERY	YORKA	COMPLETE PROFILE;FLAT BASE;CYLINDRICAL BODY NARROWING TO TRIANGULAR RIM CF COPPERGATE PER 4	JAR	PROF	59	1	479	SOOTED EXT
2	18/108	DR;ICPS;TS	POTTERY	YORKA		JAR	BS	4	1	62	SOOTED EXT
0	18/102		POTTERY	SSTMG		JAR	BS	1	0	16	
0	18/101		POTTERY	SSTMG		JAR	B	2	1	59	
0	022/096		POTTERY	YG		JAR	BS	1	1	4	SOOTED EXT
0	10/009		POTTERY	YG		JAR	BS	1	1	3	

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