

The Pottery from 2 Church Lane, Bardsey (ARC06005)

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The excavations at 2, Church Lane, Bardsey, undertaken by Archaeoscope, produced a collection of pottery almost all of which is likely to be of 11th to 13th century date. The pottery was recorded by ware type; form; decoration; glaze cover; signs of use and condition. A digital record of this pottery, quantified by sherd count, the maximum number of vessels represented by a record and weight in grams was prepared and deposited with the site archive.

Catalogue

Ceramic Building Material

Only six fragments of ceramic building material were submitted and this may indicate that ceramic roof tiles were not commonly used on the site, perhaps because of the availability of stone tiles.

These fragments consist of two pieces of brick (from contexts 3000 and 3137); a fragment of field drain of 19th-century or later date from context 3136; a small scrap of unidentified ceramic building material from context 2004 and a fragment of glazed medieval floor tile from context 3129.

The floor tile has what appears to be indistinct stamped decoration but could not be paralleled with any of the stamped tiles from Northern England published by Stopford (Stopford 2005).

Pottery

York A ware

Excavations at various sites in York have indicated that in the late 9th to 10th centuries the majority of the pottery in use in the settlement was a wheelthrown red earthenware, York A ware (1978; Mainman 1990, Anglo-Scandinavian York ware).

Chemical and petrological analysis indicates that this ware is tempered with a sand composed of coarse-grained sandstone fragments and sparse fragments of barytes. This barytes gives the fabric an extremely high barium content, compared with other sampled Yorkshire pottery. Analysis of pottery from a production site at Thorner, thought at the time of excavation to be of late medieval date (Cumberpatch and Roberts 1998-1999) indicated that

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this ware was identical to York A ware in fabric whilst a reconsideration of the typology of the waste suggests that "Thorner ware" is actually an Anglo-Scandinavian ware. The area where pottery waste was found is mainly sitting on sandstones (Millstone grit) but a band of clay, the Subcrenatum Marine Band (also known as the Pot Clay) outcrops on the hill to the south, a few hundred metres away (BGS 1:50,000 geological map, Sheet 70, Leeds).

Thorner is the neighbouring parish to Bardsey on its south side and only two highly dubious examples of this ware were present in the Bardsey collection. This seems to be strong evidence to suggest that the site itself was not occupied or even close to an occupied area in the late 9th to 11th centuries.

Thin section and chemical analyses of these two samples did not disprove a Thorner origin but offered only lukewarm support. It seems likely that these two sherds are slightly later vessels (i.e. late 11th century or later, either from Thorner or some other local source (Vince 2008, V5074-5).

York Gritty ware

By the mid 11th century, York A ware had been replaced in York by a white gritty wheelthrown ware, York Gritty ware (Holdsworth 1978; Mainman 1990). This ware was present in levels associated with the construction of the Norman minster at York, which was completed well before 1100 (Holdsworth 1995) and appears to have been the only contemporary ware in those levels. However, the ware is found throughout the 12th and into the 13th century and there are no apparent typological differences between York Gritty ware vessels of the 11th and the 13th centuries. This may, however, be partly a problem of the lack of assemblages of York Gritty ware on sites which came into use in the 12th or early 13th centuries, since sites in York almost always have a high potential for residuality (the presence in stratified assemblages of artefacts or ecofacts disturbed from earlier strata).

York Gritty ware has a much lower iron content than York A ware and lacks the high barium content of that ware. However, the coarse grit used to temper it is very similar to that found in York A ware, bar the absence of barytes, and a similar source is likely. Sherds of York Gritty ware were present on the Thorner kiln site (where they are termed "Hillam ware" by the authors, in deposits overlying the pottery waste.

A number of York A and York Gritty ware sherds have been sampled for petrological and chemical analysis and a plot of their barium and potassium content shows a clear separation of the two wares, based on potassium content, apart from a single example from Lurk Lane, Beverley, which has the white body and low barium and potassium content typical of York Gritty ware but which has the shouldered triangular rim typical of York A ware (Watkins 1991, Fig 58 No.5). That sample comes from Phase 5ai, dating to the later 10th or early 11th century (Fig 1). This suggests that the white clay used for York Gritty ware was in use by the early

11th century. However, none of the York Gritty ware sherds from Bardsey came from similar shouldered vessels, most having the cylindrical body and squared rim which is typical of late 11th to early 13th century examples.

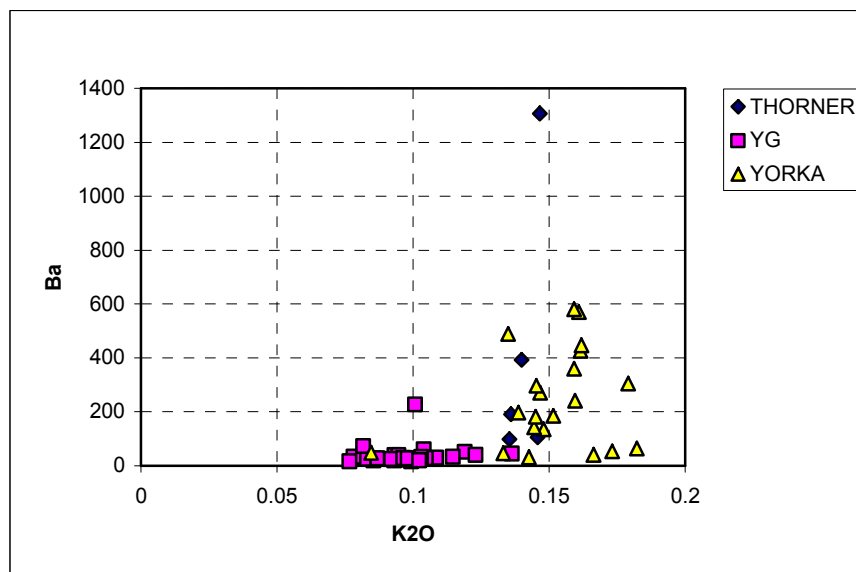


Figure 1

Of the 480 sherds of York Gritty ware from the Bardsey excavations (including those from the evaluation stage), 475 were from cylindrical-bodied jars, three came from jugs, one from a pedestal lamp and one probably from a bowl. The three jug sherds all come from strap handles. In one case the wide strap handle (more than 30mm) was joined to the body was from the top of the rim rather than the neck. This is a typologically early jug feature found in the mid 12th century at Beverley and Nottingham as well as on Stamford ware pitchers of the 11th and early 12th centuries (Young and Vince 2005; Kilmurry 1980). The other two handle fragments are from a body join and a fragment of handle, 30mm wide. A single sherd, from the evaluation, had a band of diamond roller stamping, similar to vessels found at Doncaster but rare elsewhere. Ten of the sherds have traces of red slip. This is a noticeable feature of Northern Gritty ware vessels but is rare on York Gritty ware.

One likely source of York Gritty ware is Potterton, the parish immediately to the south of Thorner. The place name itself suggests that pottery was being made in the area by the 1080s and Coal Measure clays outcrop in the parish, at Potterton Bridge. Pottery was also being made at Potterton in the 16th century (Mayes & Pirie 1966), although the products at that time were red-firing, Cistercian ware and glazed earthenwares.

Northern Gritty ware

One hundred and fifty sherds of Northern Gritty ware were present. This ware can be divided into numerous fabrics and eighteen such groups were identified here. However, extensive

analysis of Northern Gritty ware from Ingmanthorpe Manor, north of Wetherby, about 7 miles to the north-east of Bardsey, indicated that probably all of these fabrics were produced from the same raw materials, coal measures which occur in the later part of the Millstone Grit series (e.g. the Bilton coal). Potters are recorded at Knaresborough and samples of later 12th to 13th-century pottery from Knaresborough are identical in composition to those from Ingmanthorpe Manor.

However, Northern Gritty ware is a loose grouping, including all vessels with a coarse temper derived from Carboniferous sandstones but without the clean, white-firing groundmass of York Gritty ware, and it is possible that other sources were also supplying Bardsey. The pottery produced at Baildon, for example, has a similar chemical composition to some of the Inganthurpe samples. There is also an overlap in composition between York Gritty ware and Northern Gritty ware, which may suggest that Potterton produced some Northern Gritty ware.

Thus it is better at this stage to visualise Northern Gritty ware as a pottery tradition which was produced at several localities within West Yorkshire utilising similar Carboniferous clays, all of which were tempered with sands composed of Carboniferous coarse-grained sandstones.

The Bardsey site produced 150 sherds of Northern Gritty ware, most of which come from jars. The jars are wheelthrown and a minority *(11 sherds) have spots of plain lead glaze or a red slip (11 sherds). Ten jar rims were found (Fig 00). Twenty-three sherds came from jugs. Most of the sherds have a plain external lead glaze, sometimes clearly splashed. Typological features are rare although plain strap handles are present. An unusual vessel (subfabric 3) has what is probably a copper-mottled glaze, although it is mostly decayed, and is decorated with applied, thumbled and combed strips. These features suggest that the jug was copying Developed Stamford ware (Fig 00) and is therefore of later 12th or possibly early 13th-century date.

Other vessels represented are dripping dishes, including one corner from a rectangular vessel (Fig. 00). Dripping dishes appear to be an early 13th century introduction in pottery and were used to catch the dripping from a spit roast. For this reason, the sides, especially those facing the fire, are usually coated with soot, as in this case. Two sherds with an internal glaze either come from this or a similar dripping dish or possibly from an internally glazed jar, bowl or pipkin. One possible pipkin was represented by a conical foot or, possibly stubby handle. This vessel is oxidized throughout and may be a late or post-medieval vessel. Finally, a sherd of pedestal lamp was present (Fig. 00).

Miscellaneous

A single glazed vessel was sufficiently distinct from the remainder not to be classified as Northern Gritty ware, although it too contains quartz sandstone inclusions, in a fine, white body. The vessel is a rounded jug with a ribbed neck and external plain lead glaze. This

ribbed neck is a feature of several 12th-century jugs (e.g. London ware, Pearce, Vince, and Jenner 1985; Ham Green "A" ware, Barton 1963) and may ultimately be of French origin. However, the sandstone inclusions in this example suggest a West Yorkshire origin.

Stone

A single fragment of worked sandstone was recovered, from context 3088. The fragment has three original faces surviving. One has a rough tooled surface with shallow rebate 50 mm wide and 4mm deep along one edge. The face opposite this rebated face is smooth, possibly from wear rather than working (it also has green staining and was clearly recently exposed to the elements for some time) whilst the original face at right angles to the rebate is again roughly tooled. These rough tooled surfaces were probably prepared with a broad undecorated blade and are most typical of the period from the 11th to the 13th centuries.

The fragment is not diagnostic but may be from a door frame and is probably of medieval date.

Discussion

Site Interpretation and Chronology

The lack (or at least very low frequency) of Thorner ware (York A ware) indicates that the site was not occupied until after the Norman Conquest.

The main period of occupation was certainly in the late 12th to mid 13th centuries and few large stratified assemblages containing York Gritty ware did not also produced Northern Gritty ware vessels, both glazed and unglazed.

The absence of Humberware from the site is probably an indication that the site was abandoned in the late 13th or early 14th centuries.

Supply of Pottery

Most of the pottery used at Bardsey was of very local origin, but this is partially explained by the fact that Bardsey is the next parish to the north of Thorner and just two parishes north of Potterton. There is very little evidence for the use of pottery from other sources.

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