

Assessment of the Pottery from Swinton, Yorkshire (SWI07)

Alan Vince and Kate Steane

An archaeological watching brief carried out at Swinton, Yorkshire, by Fern Archaeology. The pottery from this watching brief was submitted to the authors for identification and assessment. The pottery ranges in date from the later 12th or early 13th century to the mid 18th century with every major period within this range represented.

The finds are mostly of types well-known from the Vale of Pickering but include a glazed ridge tile of late 12th to mid 13th-century type and a glazed floor tile, which requires further work to determine its likely date and origin. Both of these finds hint at a relatively high status for the first occupation on the site. A glazed jug of unusual character also requires further work to establish its origin but also suggests that the settlement had non-local contacts. It is possible that the site was able to acquire these artefacts because of its location on the Malton to Helmsley road.

Description

Ceramic Building Material

Four fragments of ceramic building material were recovered. Two were of medieval date, a glazed ridge tile of York Glazed ware and a glazed floor tile. The floor tile, context 1017, is made from a red-firing clay and was probably plain, although the rough upper surface might indicate a faint stamped design. Glazed floor tiles were rarely used in domestic buildings in the medieval period and where found are often probably reused from ecclesiastical structures, such as churches or chapels. Glazed ridge tiles were more common, but still relatively rare except on high status sites. York Glazed ware wasters have been found at Byland Abbey, confirming that this ware was a late 12th to mid 13th-century predecessor to the North Yorkshire Whiteware Brandsby-type industry which was based in villages in the Hambleton Hills.

Two fragments of post-medieval pantile were recovered. Pantiles were introduced to eastern England from the Low Countries in the later 16th century but remain uncommon in most areas until the later 17th century or later. The fragments come from contexts 1005 and 1029.

Clay Tobacco Pipes

Two fragments of clay tobacco pipe were recovered. One is from an undecorated bowl of early 18th century type and the other is a stem fragment whose bore diameter suggests an 18th or 19th century date. .

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/avac2007060.pdf>

Pottery

One hundred and two sherds of pottery were recovered. These range in date from the late 12th to mid 13th century to the later 18th or 19th century (Table 1).

Table 1

Data	emed	emod	hmed	lmed	pmed	Grand Total
Sum of Weight	873	22	689	227	140	1951
Sum of Nosh	53	2	33	5	9	102
Sum of NoV	32	2	27	5	8	74

Early Medieval (Table 1 emed)

Fifty-three sherds of pottery dating between the late 12th and the mid 13th centuries were recovered. These were of two main types, Staxton-type ware and York Glazed ware (STAXT and YORK). In addition, a single fragment of an unusual glazed jug is either of similar date or slightly later (HEDE). Most of the sherds come from jars, used in cooking, and jugs, used for the serving of drink. In addition, a single sherd comes from an unusual vessel form, here interpreted as a candle-making tray. Such vessels are rare but are found throughout eastern England and the Low Countries. They consist of a deep oval container, often with a second compartment alongside it. It is suggested that they were used in the manufacture of tallow candles with the hot wax being present in one compartment and the other being used to store completed candles. The collection is also unusual in having examples of what appears to be glazed Staxton-type ware. No glazed vessels were found at the production sites of Staxton and Potter Brompton, neighbouring villages about 18 miles east of Swinton. The identification, which is made on the basis of visual similarity in fabric, should therefore be confirmed by analysis using thin sections and chemical analysis. The Staxton-type ware collection also includes an unglazed rod handle.

The York Glazed ware, as noted above, was produced in the Hambleton Hills, between 11 and 15 miles west of Swinton. The sherds include a thumbled jug base, a type which is either of very late 12th or early 13th century date.

The third ware present is a wheelthrown, glazed jug with a rod handle. Abundant rounded oolites can be seen at x20 magnification in the fabric and these probably originated in an oolitic limestone. However, no signs of a limestone cement were seen and in the East Midlands, for example at Lyveden in Northamptonshire, it seems that oolites were either present in the clay source or the oolite was only loosely cemented (as with the Ketton Limestone, which outcrops to the west of Stamford in south Lincolnshire). Unlike Lyveden ware, however, this vessel was thrown on the wheel and the handle is decorated with vertical grooves, a typical Yorkshire form. Several examples of similar vessels have been seen by Jane Young at Hedon, in East Yorkshire (pers comm) but the geology of the Hedon area should not include oolitic clays and the nearest oolite is either the Lincolnshire Limestone or the Cave Oolite, both outcropping well to the west of Hedon. The source of the vessel could

probably be determined through thin section and chemical analysis. In addition, the vessel should be illustrated.

Table 2

cname	Form	Sum of Weight	Sum of Nosh	Sum of NoV
HEDE	JUG	252	1	1
HEDE Total		252	1	1
STAXT	CANDLE TRAY	68	1	1
	JAR	375	39	21
	JUG	68	6	3
STAXT Total		511	46	25
YORK	JAR	3	1	1
	JUG	107	5	5
YORK Total		110	6	6
Grand Total		873	53	32

High Medieval (Table 1 hmed)

Only one type of pottery of the later 13th to early 14th centuries was present, Brandsby-type ware. This ware was produced in villages in the Hambleton Hills, about 12 miles west of Swinton and connected today by a direct route, probably also the case in the medieval period.

Thirty-three sherds of Brandsby-type ware were recovered (Table 3). These were mostly from jugs with a few jars. This low jar frequency suggests that some of the Staxton-type ware from the site may be contemporary.

Table 3

cname	Form	Description	Sum of Weight	Sum of Nosh	Sum of NoV
BRAN	JAR		66	4	2
		KNIFE TRIMMED BASE	185	3	1
		SPOT GLAZE	18	1	1
	JUG		281	19	19
		Jennings 1992 CAT 96 AND 97	34	3	1
		VERT APPLIED STRIPS	20	1	1
		VERT THUMBED STRIP	22	1	1
	LARGE JAR		63	1	1
Grand Total			689	33	27

Late Medieval (Table 1 lmed)

Five sherds of later medieval date were recovered. These were of two types, Hambleton ware (Jennings 1992) and Humberware (Hayfield 1992). Confusingly, production waste from the manufacture of Hambleton ware has actually been found at Castle Howard, in the Howardian Hills (and only 5 miles to the southwest of Swinton, Vince 2002). The nearest sources of Humberware known are at York and Holme-upon-Spalding Moor (21 miles to the

southwest and 38 miles to the south respectively). In terms of distance and probably also accessibility the York source is more likely. Hambleton ware is broadly datable to the 15th and early 16th centuries and Humberware has a longer date range, starting in the mid 14th century but also continuing into the early 16th century.

Table 4

cname	Form	Description	Sum of Weight	Sum of Nosh	Sum of NoV
HAMB	JUG		115	1	1
HUM	JUG	GLAZE INT/EXT	74	1	1
		SPOTS OF GLAZE; HANDLE JOINING	25	1	1
	JUG/JAR		13	2	2
Grand Total			227	5	5

Post-medieval (Table 1 pmed)

Nine sherds of late 16th to mid 18th century date were recovered. Some of these cannot be dated more closely, such as the blackware sherd (BL) and the three sherds of Glazed Red Earthenware (GRE). The Frechen stoneware (FREC) drinking jug, however, is a late 16th to mid 17th century type, probably made earlier rather than later within this bracket (Hurst, Neal, and van Beuningen 1986; Gaimster 1997). The latest sherd is a press-moulded Staffordshire slipware dish (STCO). This vessel is decorated with broad slip trailed lines without any use of combing and therefore probably dates to the mid 18th century.

Table 5

cname	Form	Description	Sum of Weight	Sum of Nosh	Sum of NoV
BL	LARGE JAR		4	1	1
CSTN	CUP	HANDLE SCAR 15 ACROSS	37	1	1
		ROD HANDLE 10 ACROSS	12	1	1
FREC	DJ	MOULDED LEAF SPRIG	31	1	1
GRE	BOWL		25	2	1
		GLAZE INT/EXT	25	1	1
	JAR		3	1	1
STCO	DISH	DARK BROWN/WHITE SLIP	3	1	1
Grand Total			140	9	8

Early Modern (Table 1 emod)

Two sherds of refined redware teapot (REFR) were recovered. Vessels of this type were first produced in the mid 18th century but are more common in the later 18th and 19th centuries.

Assessment

Stratigraphic sequence

The watching brief recorded a series of features which cut through natural deposits and which could be of any date, unless sealed by subsequent deposits. Two such features produced sherds of medieval pottery: a round pit, C1021 (fill C1020) and another round-sectioned pit C1058 (fill C1009). The former produced the unusual oolitic-tempered jug and the latter produced a sherd of Staxton-type ware. These features suggest that there was activity on the site on the late 12th to mid 13th century and that the remaining pottery of this date probably originated on the site.

Several deposits interpreted as make-up overlay the natural and the features cut through it and three of these produced pottery finds: C1010, C1011 and C1015. Nine sherds of pottery were recovered from these deposits and they consist of York Glazed ware jugs and Staxton-type ware jars. The presence of a thumbled jug base indicates that this dumping took place in the very late 12th or early 13th century or later.

Above this dumping was evidence for occupation, which unfortunately did not produce any finds, and then further dumping, of which one deposit, 1013, produced four pot sherds, two of similar types to those in the earlier dump and one sherd of Brandsby-type ware. This presumably indicates the presence of another building phase, datable to the late 13th century or later.

The majority of the remaining finds came from the backfill of wall foundations which are interpreted by the excavator as 18th and 19th-century structures. One of the walls can be identified on the 1845 Tithe map whilst others are absent from that map and present on the Ordnance Survey map of 1854. The finds, however, appear to be almost all residual medieval in date. The exceptions are three sherds of glazed red earthenware, the Staffordshire press-moulded dish and the two pantile fragments. These indicate that the structures are later than the mid 18th century, which is consistent with the cartographic evidence. These finds include the glazed ridge tile and floor tile fragments, which both indicate that buildings of some status existed in the area.

Two deposits were interpreted as being demolition debris from the destruction of these structures (C1003) and a subsequent spread (C1002). Probably, however, all of the finds from C1003 are residual medieval and post-medieval in date whilst those from C1002 include the two clay tobacco pipes and the refined redware teapot sherds.

Chronological Summary

There is evidence from the finds for activity on this site in the later 12th to mid 13th centuries or later but no sign of earlier activity. The Vale of Pickering, however, has a gap in its pottery sequence which ceases in the mid 9th century (when the settlement at West Heslerton was abandoned) and does not start again until the foundation of the Staxton and Potter Brompton

industries in the mid/late 12th century. Excavations by Fern Archaeology at Leppington, only 10 miles to the south of Swinton, have produced earlier 12th-century types, as have excavations at Easingwold. However, both of these sites lie in the Vale of York, and it may be that there was some sort of cultural boundary separating the Vale of Pickering, in which cooking took place without the use of pottery, and the Vale of York, where there is a continuous pottery sequence from the mid 9th century onwards (Mainman 1993; Mainman 1990; Vince and Steane 2005). For this reason, it is unwise to conclude from this watching brief that Swinton was not occupied before the late 12th to mid 13th century. However, it is quite likely that the foundation of abbeys such as Byland and Rievaulx would have had an effect on the area either by encouraging the production of an agricultural surplus in the area or by providing a material for goods like pottery, which were then available for sale to secular settlements in the area.

The pottery, given the small size of the excavated area and the lack of remaining stratigraphy, covers the entire period from the 13th century to the 18th century and indicates that once founded the settlement at Swinton was continuously occupied, both before and after the mid 14th century crisis.

Further Work

The source of the oolite-tempered vessel, which is stratified in what could be a later 12th to 13th-century feature, the source of the glazed Staxton-type ware and the source of the glazed floor tile should be confirmed using thin section and chemical analysis. A drawing of the oolitic tempered ware vessel and the possible candle tray should also be produced.

Costing for this work, at 2007-8 prices, is £200.00 plus VAT (assuming that the pots are drawn at Fern Archaeology).

Retention

All of the finds are stratified and should be retained for potential future study.

Bibliography

- Gaimster, David (1997) *German Stoneware 1200-1900*. London, British Museums Publ Ltd
- Hayfield, C. (1992) "Humberware: the development of a later medieval pottery tradition." in D. Gaimster and M. Redknap, eds., *Everyday and Exotic Pottery from Europe: Studies in honour of John G. Hurst*, Oxbow Books, Oxford, 38-44
- Hurst, John G, Neal, David S, and van Beuningen, H J E (1986) *Pottery Produced and Traded in North-West Europe 1350-1650*. Rotterdam Papers VI Rotterdam, Museum Boymans-van Beuningen
- Jennings, Sarah (1992) *Medieval Pottery in the Yorkshire Museum*. York, The Yorkshire Museum

- Mainman, A J (1990) *Anglo-Scandinavian Pottery from 16-22 Coppergate*. The Archaeology of York 16/5 London, Council British Archaeol
- Mainman, A J (1993) *The pottery from 46-54 Fishergate*. The Archaeology of York 16/6 London, Council British Archaeol
- Vince, Alan (2002) *Assessment of the medieval and later pottery from Castle Howard, North Yorkshire (CASH02)*. AVAC Reports 2002/81 Lincoln,
- Vince, Alan and Steane, Kate (2005) *Blue Bridge Lane and Fishergate House: Artefacts & Environmental Evidence: The Humberware Pottery*.
http://www.archaeologicalplanningconsultancy.co.uk/mono/001/rep_ceramics_humber.html

Appendix 1

Context	class	cname	subfabric	Form	Nosh	NoV	Action	Description	Part	We
1002	PIPECLAY	PIPECLAY		CLAYPIPE	1	1		18-19TH CENTURY BORE	STEM	
1002	PIPECLAY	PIPECLAY		CLAYPIPE	1	1		1710-40, SIMILAR TO MANN 1977, 152	BOWL/HEEL/STEM	
1002	POTTERY	REFR		TPOT	1	1		MOULDED DEC	BS	
1002	POTTERY	REFR		TPOT	1	1			SPOUT	
1003	POTTERY	BL		LARGE JAR	1	1			BS	
1003	POTTERY	STAXT		JAR	1	1			B	
1003	POTTERY	CSTN		CUP	1	1		ROD HANDLE 10 ACROSS	H	
1003	POTTERY	HUM		JUG/JAR	1	1			BS	
1003	POTTERY	CSTN		CUP	1	1		HANDLE SCAR 15 ACROSS	B	
1003	POTTERY	BRAN		LARGE JAR	1	1			BS	
1003	POTTERY	GRE		JAR	1	1			BS	
1003	POTTERY	HAMB		JUG	1	1			B	
1004	POTTERY	BRAN		JUG	2	2			BS	
1005	POTTERY	STAXT		JAR	4	1			BS	
1005	POTTERY	STAXT		JAR	1	1		HORIZ GROOVE	BS	
1005	POTTERY	STAXT		JUG	1	1		ROD HANDLE 15 ACROSS; NO GLAZE	BS	
1005	POTTERY	STAXT		CANDLE TRAY	1	1	DR	GLAZE INT	BS	

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/avac2007060.pdf>

Context	class	cname	subfabric	Form	Nosh	NoV	Action	Description	Part	We
1005	POTTERY	BRAN		JUG	2	2			BS	
1005	POTTERY	BRAN		JAR	3	1			BS	
1005	CBM	PMTIL		PANT	1	1			BS	
1006	POTTERY	BRAN		JUG	1	1			B	
1006	POTTERY	STCO		DISH	1	1		DARK BROWN/WHITE SLIP	BS	
1007	POTTERY	YORK		JAR	1	1		GLAZE INT	BS	
1008	POTTERY	YORK		JUG	1	1			BS	
1008	POTTERY	STAXT		JAR	1	1			BS	
1009	POTTERY	STAXT		JAR	1	1			BS	
1010	POTTERY	STAXT		JAR	1	1			BS	
1010	POTTERY	STAXT		JAR	2	2			BS	
1010	POTTERY	STAXT		JAR	1	1			BS	
1010	POTTERY	STAXT		JAR	1	1			BS	
1010	POTTERY	STAXT		JAR	1	1			B	

Context	class	cname	subfabric	Form	Nosh	NoV	Action	Description	Part	We
1010	POTTERY	YORK		JUG	1	1		2 CORDONS	BS	
1011	POTTERY	YORK		JUG	1	1			BS	
1012	POTTERY	STAXT		JUG	1	1		GLAZE EXT	BS	
1012	POTTERY	STAXT		JUG	4	1	TS;ICPS	GLAZE EXT; HORIZ GROOVES	BS	
1012	POTTERY	STAXT		JAR	1	1			BS	
1012	POTTERY	STAXT		JAR	3	1			BS	
1012	POTTERY	STAXT		JAR	1	1			BS	
1012	POTTERY	STAXT		JAR	1	1			B	
1012	POTTERY	STAXT		JAR	3	1			B	
1012	POTTERY	STAXT		JAR	12	1			BS	
1012	POTTERY	BRAN		JAR	1	1			BS	
1012	POTTERY	BRAN		JUG	2	2			BS	
1012	POTTERY	BRAN		JUG	3	1		JENNINGS 1992 CAT 96 AND 97	R;BS	
1012	POTTERY	BRAN		JAR	3	1		KNIFE TRIMMED BASE	B;BS	
1013	POTTERY	STAXT		JAR	2	2			BS	

Context	class	cname	subfabric	Form	Nosh	NoV	Action	Description	Part	We
1013	POTTERY	YORK		JUG	1	1			BS	
1013	POTTERY	BRAN		JUG	1	1			B	
1015	POTTERY	YORK		JUG	1	1		THUMBED BASE	B	
1016	POTTERY	GRE		BOWL	1	1		GLAZE INT/EXT	BS	
1016	CBM	MTIL	YORK	RIDGE	1	1		GLAZE EXT	BS	
1016	POTTERY	HUM		JUG/JAR	1	1			BS	
1016	POTTERY	BRAN		JUG	2	2			BS	
1016	POTTERY	STAXT		JAR	2	2			BS	
1016	POTTERY	HUM		JUG	1	1		SPOTS OF GLAZE; HANDLE JOINING	BS	
1017	CBM	MTIL		FLOOR	1	1		DIMPLED SURFACE SUGGESTS THE POSSIBILITY OF SOME PATTERN BUT PROBABLY NOT THE CASE; NOTHING SIMILAR IN STOPFORD	BS	
1020	POTTERY	HEDE	OOLITHS	JUG	1	1	DR; TS;ICPS	ROD HANDLE 34 ACROSS	H	
1029	POTTERY	GRE		BOWL	2	1			BS	
1029	CBM	PMTIL		PANT	1	1			BS	
U/S	POTTERY	FREC		DJ	1	1		MOULDED LEAF ADDED TO SURFACE	BS	
U/S	POTTERY	BRAN		JAR	1	1		SPOT GLAZE	BS	
U/S	POTTERY	BRAN		JUG	1	1		VERT APPLIED STRIPS	BS	
U/S	POTTERY	BRAN		JUG	1	1		VERT THUMBED STRIP	BS	
U/S	POTTERY	BRAN		JUG	9	9			BS	
U/S	POTTERY	HUM		JUG	1	1		GLAZE INT/EXT	BS	

Context	class	cname	subfabric	Form	Nosh	NoV	Action	Description	Part	We
---------	-------	-------	-----------	------	------	-----	--------	-------------	------	----