

Assessment of the Pottery from Bishopthorpe Palace, York (YBP'07)

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A small collection of pottery and clay tobacco pipe fragments was recovered from excavations at Bishopthorpe Palace, York, undertaken by Field Archaeology Specialists Ltd (Site Code: ybp'07). The finds range in date from the 11th to 13th centuries and the 18th century.

Description

Clay Tobacco Pipes

Four unmarked stem fragments were recovered. From their bore diameters, two can be dated to the early 17th century or later and one to the later 17th century or later.

Pottery

Medieval

Eighteen sherds of medieval pottery were recovered. The earliest type is York Gritty ware, produced in West Yorkshire from the mid 11th century until the mid 13th century (1978). Two wares current in the later 12th and early 13th centuries were present. They are Beverley glazed ware (BEVO2B – fine-textured fabric with a suspension glaze, Watkins 1991; Didsbury and Watkins 1992 – and York Glazed ware, Jennings 1992). The York glazed ware includes three sherds which are probably 13th rather than 12th century. One of these comes from a seal jug (Jennings 1992) and the other two have roller-stamped decoration. Seal jugs seem to have been a speciality of the York glazed ware industry and the vessels are decorated with large stamped medallions in the form of medieval seals (but were not made with actual seal matrices).

A single undiagnostic sherd of Brandsby-type ware (BRAN) dates between the later 13th and the 15th centuries and an oval-sectioned Humberware (HUM) jug handle with grooved decoration down the back is probably of mid 14th century or later date.

Post-medieval

A single sherd of Westerwald stoneware was recovered (WEST). The sherd comes from a large straight-sided vessel, probably a jardinière (*Blumenkübel*) with repeating sprigged decoration around the rim and sprigged medallions, with a floral/rural theme on the body. The vessel uses no paint to augment the decoration.

Two types of jardinière are known in Westerwald stoneware. One has an elaborate pedestal urn form and the other is flat-based with straight sides. The Bishopthorpe vessel probably

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belongs to the first type (Reineking - von Bock 1986, 416-8). Examples in the Stadt Museum in Cologne are dated to the 19th century (although on what basis is unclear). However, The lack of paint and the overall style of decoration suggests a date closer to the middle of the 18th century, after which date Westerwald stoneware is rarely imported to England (although production continues to the present day).

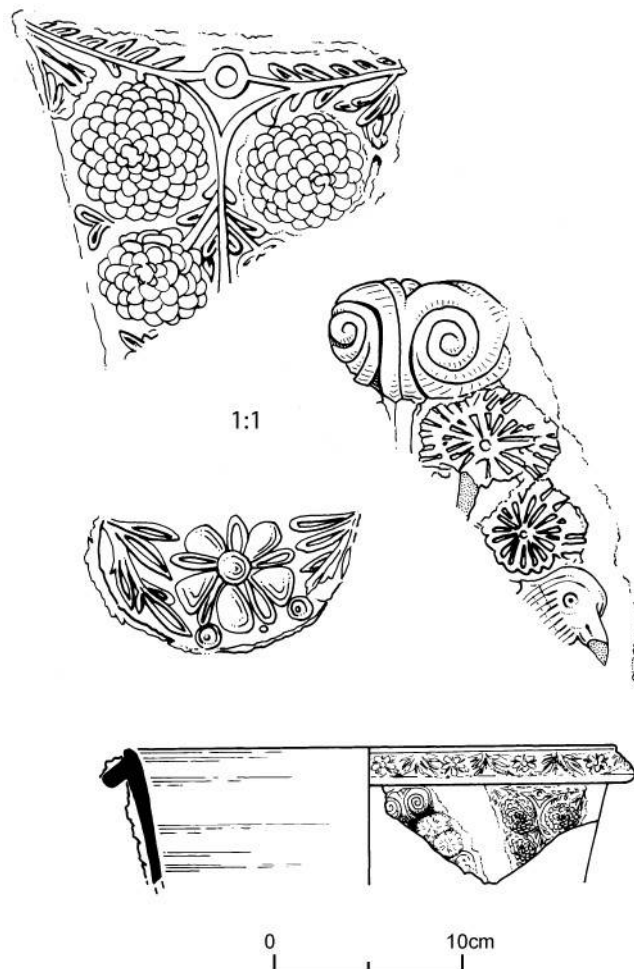


Figure 1 Westerwald Stoneware jardinière. Illustrated by Charlotte Bentley.

Assessment

Stratigraphy

The finds come from seven contexts and the terminus post quem for each context is given in Table 1. Given the long lifespan of the earliest pottery types present, it is quite possible that the earliest activity represented on the site dates to the first half of the 13th century. The dating of context 1066 depends on the single sherd of Humberware without which it too would date to the early 13th century.

Table 1

Context	Date	Comments	Grand Total
1009	Early 17 th century or		3

	later		
1057	Late 13 th century or later		2
1065	Mid 11 th century or later		2
1066	Late 14 th century or later	Mostly later 12 th to early 13 th century	10
1094	Mid 18 th century		2
1099	Early 17 th century or later		1
1100	Late 12 th century or later		3
Grand Total		2	1
			23

Chronology

The bishop's palace at Bishopthorpe was built following the purchase of the manor from the monks of Kirkstall Abbey by Walter de Grey, Archbishop of York, in 1226. By 1241 de Grey had built his house and chapel on the site. The pottery does not include any types which need pre-date 1226 and most of the pottery could have still been current in 1241, although soon after that one would imagine that many of the types would have ceased to be used. It is likely, therefore, that the bulk of the pottery is associated with the construction and early use of the bishop's house (or possibly with the occupation and destruction of earlier buildings levelled by the archbishop).

With the exception of the stoneware jardinière, the pottery and clay pipes are unexceptional for any site in York and it does not seem that the high status of the occupants is reflected in the quality or function of the finds. The jardinière, however, is a type which in the mid 18th century was probably only used in high status houses, where it might be found in an ornamental garden, an orangerie or even in the interior of the house.

Further Work

The Westerwald stoneware vessel is unusual and has been illustrated and photographs taken of the sprigged decoration. None of the other finds requires further work.

Retention

All of the finds should be retained for future re-examination.

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Appendix 1

REFNO	Action	Context	class	Cname	Description	Form	Part	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Use
1		1009	PIPECLAY	PIPECLAY	17-18TH CENTURY BORE	CLAYPIPE	STEM	2	2	5	
1		1009	PIPECLAY	PIPECLAY	17TH CENTURY BORE	CLAYPIPE	STEM	1	1	1	
7		1057	POTTERY	BRAN		JUG	BS	1	1	8	
7		1057	POTTERY	YORK		JUG	BS	1	1	15	
		1065	POTTERY	YG		JAR	BS	2	2	2	SOOTED EXT
9		1066	POTTERY	YORK	APPLIED STRIP SEAL/STAMPED	JUG	BS	1	1	15	
9		1066	POTTERY	YORK		JUG	R	1	1	5	
9		1066	POTTERY	YORK		JUG	BS	3	3	9	
9		1066	POTTERY	YG		JAR	BS	1	1	2	
9		1066	POTTERY	HUM	STRAP HANDLE 5 GROOVES; 31 ACROSS	JUG	H	1	1	27	
9		1066	POTTERY	YORK	RECT RST	JUG	BS	1	1	2	
9		1066	POTTERY	BEVO2B		JUG	BS	2	1	4	
10		1094	POTTERY	YORK	RST	JUG	BS	1	1	8	
11	DR;PH	1094	POTTERY	WEST	SPRIGGED FLORAL/BIRD DEC	JARDINIER	R	1	1	137	
13		1099	PIPECLAY	PIPECLAY	17TH CENTURY BORE	CLAYPIPE	STEM	1	1	6	

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	1100	POTTERY	YORK	ROD HANDLE 21 DIA	JUG	H	1	1	32
12	1100	POTTERY	YORK		JUG	BS	2	2	44

