

Assessment of Pottery and other finds from Gracious Street, Knaresborough, North Yorkshire (OSA08 EX03)

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A small collection of pottery together with two sherds of clay tobacco pipe and two sherds of ceramic building material, was recovered from an archaeological excavation at Gracious Street, Knaresborough, North Yorkshire, carried out by On-Site Archaeology Ltd (Site Code: OSA08 EX03). The finds range in date from the Roman period to the late 18th century or later with the majority dating between the later 11th and the early 14th centuries.

Description

A total of 55 sherds were submitted. These were identified and recorded (App 1). The total quantities are given in Table 1.

Table 1

class	Sherds	Objects	Weight (gm)
CBM	2	2	10
CTP	2	2	3
POTTERY	51	50	436
Grand Total	55	54	449

Ceramic Building Material

Two sherds of ceramic building material were recorded. One of these was too small to identify and the other was a sherd of pantile of post-medieval or later date. The earliest pantiles found in the British Isles probably date to the later 16th century and occur on sites with easy access to the east coast, reflecting the origin of the pantile in the Low Countries. However, in Knaresborough a later date is more likely.

Clay Tobacco Pipe

Two sherds of clay tobacco pipe were recorded. Both were stems whose bore diameters suggest a late 18th century or later date.

Pottery

A total of 51 sherds of pottery were recorded (Table 2). These have been assigned to the Roman, medieval, later medieval and post-medieval periods, with a single sherd which might be either of Roman or Anglo-Scandinavian date.

Table 2

Date	Sherds	Vessels	Weight (gm)
Roman	1	1	3
Roman or Anglo-Scandinavian	1	1	6
Medieval	40	39	319
Later Medieval	3	3	49
Post-medieval	6	6	59
Grand Total	51	50	436

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Roman

A single sherd of Roman pottery was recorded. It came from an oxidized vessel and has a fabric tempered with sparse sand derived from sandstones. Several production sites making similar wares are known or inferred in the Vale of York, from Catterick in the north to Castleford in the south.

Roman or Anglo-Scandinavian?

A single sherd could either be a second Roman sherd or a sherd of Anglo-Scandinavian York A ware (1978).

Medieval

Forty sherds of pottery dating between the later 11th and the early 14th centuries were recovered. They are of three types: York Gritty ware (YG); Northern Gritty ware (NGR); and miscellaneous local medieval wares (MEDLOC).

Table 3

cname	Sherds	Vessels	Weight (gm)
MEDLOC	1	1	2
NGR	29	29	241
YG	10	9	76
Grand Total	40	39	319

York Gritty ware has a light-firing, wheelthrown fabric and is tempered with large sherds of coarse-grained sandstone, which in thin section and x20 magnification using a stereomicroscope can be seen to be probably Millstone Grit. Rounded and angular mudstone or relict clay pellets with a similar colour and texture to the groundmass are also present. This ware was produced, probably alongside other places, at Potterton, situated close to the Leeds-York road (since the placename, Potterton, occurs in the Domesday Book in 1087 at a time when the only common pottery found in York is of this type, Holdsworth 1995; Mainman 1990).

Three of the York Gritty ware sherds have a thin red slip and spots of glaze. Similar features were noted on some of the examples from Ingmanthorpe Manor, near Wetherby (Vince and Young 2007). Glaze is rare on late 11th-century vessels, probably indicating a 12th to early 13th century date for these sherds. The remaining examples are typical, including one where knife-trimming has been used to pare down the clay on the lower part of the body and another with a squared rim.

Northern Gritty ware has a slightly higher iron content than York Gritty ware and a slightly finer grain size to the sand, which is still entirely derived from the weathering of coarse-grained sandstones. It is likely that this ware was produced over a wider area than the York Gritty ware, utilising outcrops of Carboniferous mudstone.

The MEDLOC sherd, by contrast with the remaining medieval pottery, has a red-firing body, but is similarly tempered with a sandstone-derived sand.

Late Medieval

Three sherds of Humberware (HUM) were recorded. All came from jugs. None of the sherds had any typological traits which might aid dating. Humberware was produced from the mid 14th to the early 16th centuries and the nearest known production sites were on the outskirts of York (Vince 2004).

Post-medieval

Six sherds of post-medieval pottery were recorded (Table 4). These are of five different types: blackware (BL); Cistercian ware (CSTN); Midlands Yellow ware (MY); Ryedale ware (RYEDALE); and Staffordshire wheelthrown, yellow-bodied slipware (STSL). The only one of these types which can be reliably attributed to a source is Ryedale ware, which was produced in villages around the edge of the North Yorkshire Moors, where light-firing Middle Jurassic clays are exposed. It probably arrived at Knaresborough via Thirsk.

Table 4

cname	Form	Description	Date	Sherds	Vessels	Weight (gm)
BL	BOWL	INT BLACK GL	Late 16 th to 19 th centuries	1	1	32
	CUP	INT BLACK GL	Late 16 th to 19 th centuries	1	1	4
CSTN	CUP		Late 15 th to late 16 th centuries	1	1	9
MY	-		Late 16 th to mid 17 th centuries	1	1	1
RYEDALE	BOWL		Late 15 th to mid 17 th centuries	1	1	7
STSL	POSS	MARbled SLIP PANEL EXT	Late 17 th to mid 18 th centuries	1	1	6
Grand Total				6	6	59

Assessment

Dating and Interpretation of Stratigraphy

The earliest finds came from the subsoil, 3009, but are interpreted as being introduced as a result of gardening or ploughing of the overlying layers. Sixteen sherds were recovered in total, of York Gritty and Northern Gritty wares. As a group they would date to the later 12th to mid 14th centuries. A fragment of pantile is clearly intrusive, perhaps from the foundations of the stone structure (see below).

Post-hole 3020 (fill 3019) was cut through the subsoil and produced two sherds, one of Roman date and the other a sherd of Northern Gritty ware of later 12th century or later date.

A truncated pit, 3016, (fill 3015) produced an assemblage of pottery which included a sherd of Humberware, alongside five sherds of earlier types. This association could either indicate that the pit fill dates to the period of transition in the mid 14th century or that the earlier types are residual, in which case the pit could be of any date from the mid 14th to the early 16th centuries.

A further post-hole, 3012 (fill 3011) also cutting the subsoil, produced post-medieval sherds of Midlands Yellow and Cistercian wares which indicate a later 16th to mid 17th century (or later) date for the feature.

All of these features were sealed by a layer interpreted as either a garden soil or ploughsoil, 3008. It produced 21 sherds of pottery which range in date from the Roman/Anglo-Scandinavian period to the later 15th century or later. These are consistent with the disturbance of earlier deposits on the site rather than contemporary refuse.

This soil was cut by the foundations of a structure, three of which produced finds: 3003, 3005 and 3006. These consist of two fragments of clay tobacco pipe of late 18th-century or later date, a sherd of medieval pottery and three fragments of post-medieval pottery, of types which could have been current in the mid 18th century. Together, these finds suggest a mid/late 18th century date (or later) for the construction of this building, which is consistent with the excavator's interpretation that the building was demolished in the early 19th century.

Retention

All of the finds are from stratified deposits and should therefore be retained for potential re-examination.

Further Work

No further work is recommended on these finds.

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Appendix 1

Context	class	cname	Form	subfabric	Description	Part	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Condition	Use
3003	POTTERY	NGR	JUG			BS	1	1	13		WHITE DEPO INT
3003	CTP	PIPECLAY	PIPE		L18TH/19TH BORE DIAM	BS	1	1	1		
3003	POTTERY	STSL	POSS		MARbled SLIP PANEL EXT	BS	1	1	6		
3005	POTTERY	BL	CUP	CMR	INT BLACK GL	BS	1	1	4		
3006	POTTERY	BL	BOWL	VARIEGATED CALCAREOUS	INT BLACK GL	BS	1	1	32		GLAZE WORN
3006	CTP	PIPECLAY	PIPE		L18TH/19TH BORE DIAM	BS	1	1	2		
3008	POTTERY	HUM	JUG			BS	1	1	14		
3008	POTTERY	HUM	JUG			B	1	1	21		
3008	POTTERY	NGR	JAR			BS	5	5	56		SOOTED EXT
3008	POTTERY	NGR	JUG?	ABUNDANT MED SST SAND; CF WINKSLEY		BS	1	1	11		
3008	POTTERY	NGR	JUG			BS	11	11	109		
3008	POTTERY	RPOT/YORKA	JAR	OXID WITH SPARSE SST SAND		BS	1	1	6		
3008	POTTERY	RYEDALE	BOWL			BS	1	1	7		
3009	POTTERY	NGR	JAR		OBTUSE ANGLED;SAGGING BASE	B	1	1	10		SOOTED EXT
3009	POTTERY	NGR	JAR			BS	5	5	22		SOOTED EXT
3009	POTTERY	NGR	JUG?		EXT PLAIN GL	BS	1	1	4		
3009	CBM	PMTIL	PANT	SOFT INCLUSIONLESS		BS	1	1	9		

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				WITH FINE MOULDING SAND					
3009	POTTERY	YG	JAR		BS	4	4	40	
3009	POTTERY	YG	JAR		BS	1	1	5	SOOTED EXT
3009	POTTERY	YG	JAR	KT AT BASE	R	1	1	14	SOOTED EXT
3009	POTTERY	YG	JAR	SQUARED RIM	BS	3	2	16	SOOTED EXT
				THIN RED SLIP;PLAIN GLAZE SPLASHES					
3011	CBM	CBM	-	SILTY MICACEOUS	BS	1	1	1	
3011	POTTERY	CSTN	CUP		H	1	1	9	
3011	POTTERY	MY	-		BS	1	1	1	
3015	POTTERY	HUM	JUG	EXT PLAIN GL	BS	1	1	14	WHITE DEPO INT
3015	POTTERY	MEDLOC	JAR	RED BODY;SST SAND	BS	1	1	2	
3015	POTTERY	NGR	JUG		BS	3	3	7	
3015	POTTERY	YG	JAR		BS	1	1	1	
3019	POTTERY	NGR	JUG	WT;EXT PLAIN GL SPLASHES	BS	1	1	9	
3019	POTTERY	RPOT	-	OXID WITH SPARSE SST SAND	BS	1	1	3	