

Burdale 2006 (BUR06) excavation: pottery report

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Overview

A total of 118 sherds of pottery were identified within the finds assemblage from the above excavation. These, along with other finds, have been catalogued in a database (BUR06.mdb) which is to be deposited as part of the digital archive with the Archaeology Data Service (<http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/>). The assemblage was restricted to visual examination only.

Prehistoric

IA Ware (sherd count = 2)

This is a rough, thick walled, relatively soft, hand-thrown fabric which has buff to grey-buff surfaces with a mid grey core and is tempered with mineral grits up to 5mm across. The sherds fall within the broad spectrum of published Iron Age fabrics in the northeast although the specifics of the inclusions vary geographically (for example, see Buckland et al, 1990: Sumpter, 1990). This fabric is generally considered to be of the earlier Iron Age.

Both sherds identified are residual from clearance layers of top soil or plough furrows and thus only hint at Iron Age activity in the area.

Iron Age / Roman

Calcite Gritted wares (8)

It can be difficult to assign Calcite Gritted Ware sherds to a particular period as the fabric continues in use from the Iron Age into the post Roman period (see below). Over time this pottery becomes wheel thrown, consistently reduced and more extravagant in terms of rim form. Eight sherds were assigned to this tradition but were generally very small, too abraded and lacking in diagnostic features to assign to a specific period. One shard with an undeveloped rim form could suggest an earlyish date or the possibly that it from a vessel form such as dish or bowl.

The condition of these sherds suggests the possibility that they may be largely residual. The presence of Huntcliffe ware rims suggests some of these sherds may be from such vessels (see below).

Roman

Calcite gritted wares (2)

Two sherds of this ware have distinctive hooked rims which with the presence of an internal lid seating confirm them as coming from Huntcliffe type jars (Gibson & Woods, 1990, 183-4 & figs 68, 142, 150: Swan 1988, 36 & fig 16: Tomber & Dore, 1998, 201).

Huntcliffe ware is generally dated to the later 4th and possibly into the 5th century. It is possible but not provable that the undiagnostic sherds in the Calcite Gritted ware tradition noted above relate to this ware. The absence of earlier Knapperton type rims (also found at Norton - Hayes & Whitley, 1950, 30-1 & fig 11) may be significant.

Crambeck wares (1)

A single, abraded rim shard of Crambeck Reduced ware was noted. This ware has a hard, slightly abrasive, wheel-thrown fabric that has slipped medium grey surfaces and a very light grey core. Production appears to begin very late within the 3rd century and continues into the 5th (Corder, 1989: Evans, 1989, 55: Tomber & Dore, 1998, 197)

East Yorkshire Grey wares (48)

This ware made up the bulk of the Roman assemblage. It has a hard, slightly abrasive, wheel-thrown fabric that generally has a light to medium grey core and surfaces with the latter sometimes decorated with burnished lines. The clay contains sand which includes quartz (0.1-0.2mm) and grits such as iron ore. It has an expanded production from the mid 3rd century with kiln sites including Norton and Holme-on-Spalding Moor (Corder, 1934; 1950, 27: Hayes, 1988: Swan, 1988, 34 & pl xvi). The sherds included one with a hooked Rim with lid seating (SF 309) and part of lid (SF 149) and thus representative of Late Roman cooking pots.

A subset of this ware was initially assigned to *Fabric B* in being coarser, irregularly fired and possibly hand thrown but the fabric is similar enough to include here.

Eboracum ware (1)

A single rim shard from a *mortarium* was tentatively assigned to this ware (Tomber & Dore, 1998, 199) although this is generally seen as in use early within the Roman period.

Samian (5)

Five sherds of Samian (Johns, 1971: Tomber & Dore, 1998, 25 - 41) were identified mainly through the presence of the distinctive fabric and slip applied to this ware. Most were small, fragmented and abraded and without other

diagnostic features used to date this pottery more closely. However, the fabrics are generally suggestive of the later products of this industry which went into decline in the 3rd century. One shard had been reused evidencing line/dot incised decoration and pierced by hole (SF 219) but unfortunately recovered from topsoil.

Early Medieval

Organic Tempered Wares (14)

These fabrics are also known as Grass or Chaff Tempered Ware. Originally thought to have been tempered with grass but today dung or cereal waste is often seen as the source for the temper (Hamerow *et al* 1994, p.13).

Organic Tempered Wares are known before the Roman period but seem to disappear and then reappear in the Anglo Saxon period (*ibid*). Some of the sherds at Burdale are in demonstrably post Roman contexts, for example, a shard SF 142 and a spindle whorl (SF 141) of Anglian form (see Walton Rogers, 1997, 1734 - 41) were both found in context (1203).

Hamerow *et al* (p. 15 -16) further suggest that in the post Roman period 'the technique of chaff tempering was adopted first in the S. or SE. England in the 5th century, spread further to the W. and N. during the later 6th and 7th centuries and survived there long after it had been replaced in its place of origin', even as late as the early 10th century. The lack of 9 – 10th pottery such as Torksey Ware, known from other sites on the Yorkshire Wolds (Austin 1999, Vince & Steane 2008), in the assemblage might suggest an earlier date here.

Spatially, Organic Tempered Wares are represented in the area identified, for example, at West Heslerton (Vince 1998) and Sancton (Vince 2004). Further afield it has also been recognised in Anglian York (Mainman1993) where activity is dated to the late 7th – mid 9th centuries.

Fabric A (13)

Empty linear voids up to 4 mm long as visible
Occasional quartz inclusions up to 1mm
Dusting of minute, shiny (mica?) particles
Hand thrown
Oxidized (reddish) exterior and interior surfaces where visible
Light, comparatively soft fabric (clamp fired?)
Often soot covered exterior with burnt residues on interior (washing may have removed in some cases)
Burning to fabric core in some cases
Thick walled c. 10+ mm
Sherds of sufficient size (SF 120, X308) exhibit a curved profile suggestive of globular cooking pots

Fabric C (1)

As Fabric A with linear voids but
Thinner walled (up to 6mm thick)
Occasional mica
Heavily gritted with fine particles of a dark (iron based?) mineral
Oxidized surfaces with a dark core

This small group of Anglian pottery sherds probably represents cooking pots.

Medieval (5)

Five sherds were assigned to this period mainly through the presence of glaze. This group contained probably examples of York or Scarborough white, Brandsby and Humber ware (Jennings, 1992: McCarthy & Brooks, 1989).

All these sherds were recovered from topsoil (1001) or a definition context (1006) at the base of the topsoil and probably represent the spreading of manure in the Medieval period.

Post Medieval (1)

A single shard was dated to this period appearing to be a piece of modern flower pot. This lack of 'background noise' may be real or reflect an onsite collections policy.

Unidentified (31)

A group of sherds were either not identifiable or were missing from the assemblage.

Summary

Table 2: Overview of the pottery from Burdale 2006

Period	Fabric	no. sherds	%
Prehistoric	IA ware	2	1.69
Iron Age / Roman	Calcite gritted ware	8	6.78
Roman	Calcite gritted ware (Huntcliffe)	2	1.69
	Crambeck ware (Reduced)	1	0.85
	East Yorkshire Grey wares	48	40.68
	Eboracum ware	1	0.85
	Samian	5	4.24
sub total		57	48.3
Early Medieval	Organic Tempered ware (fabric A)	13	11.02
	Organic Tempered ware (fabric C)	1	0.85
sub total		14	11.86

Medieval	various	5	4.24
Post Medieval		1	0.85
Unidentified		31	26.27
total		118	100.00

Where identifiable the sherds mostly represent utilitarian vessels such as cooking pots, jars and mortaria.

The small amount of Iron Age and Calcite Gritted sherds without diagnostic features are largely residual.

The assemblage for the Roman period is generally similar to that from other rural sites in the area evidencing later Roman activity (for example see Austin, 1999; Jelley & Austin, 2007) with the presence of East Yorkshire Grey, Crambeck and Huntcliffe wares (the latter two admittedly in small quantities) plus a scattering of Samian pottery. As noted the Roman sherds are generally fragmented, abraded and small. They are also demonstrably residual in many cases. However, this does not preclude the possibility of surviving Roman contexts.

Despite having a soft, clamp fired fabric the small group of Anglian period sherds demonstrate a relatively (to Roman material) limited exposure to abrasive activity which suggests limited post deposition disturbance.

This is perhaps confirmed by the few Medieval and Post Medieval sherds identified within the assemblage which are restricted to topsoil and probably relate to the agricultural practice of using midden to manure fields.

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