

Burdale 2007 (BUR07) excavation: pottery report

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Overview

A total of 309 sherds of pottery were identified within the finds assemblage from the above excavation. These, along with other finds, have been catalogued in a database (BUR07.mdb) which with this report 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.

Bronze Age

Beaker (sherd count = 1)

This Early Bronze Age (EBA) ware is represented by a single sherd which has a characteristic cross section as described by David Clarke as 'normally tri-coloured in section, with a roughly equal depth of oxidised red clay sandwiching the black reduced core, thus: red/black/red' (1970, 255 and Fig. XIII). He further notes the 'preponderance of crushed stone grit in Northern British beakers. The grits here include white chalky fragments which Clarke notes 'is most frequent in beakers from the Yorkshire Wolds (*ibid* 256). The sherd is decorated with an incised herringbone design (Fig. 1) which is known from a number of sites in the area including Rudstone (Clarke, 170, Fig. 536), Garrowby Wold (Fig. 652), Aldro (fig. 755) and Goodmanham (Fig. 303, Pl. 5). The sherd is clearly residual within a context (1078) containing Roman and Early Medieval pottery but maybe indicative of EBA activity in the local area.



Fig. 1 Beaker sherd

Bucket Urn (1)

Represented by a single base sherd from a handmade, thick walled (c. 20 mm), flat bottomed vessel. The hard, oxidised fabric contains substantial mineral grits (up to 10 mm). The vessel walls rise towards the vertical as surviving suggestive of a Bucket Urn present in Yorkshire in the EBA (Gibson, 1986, 53 & fig. 22) but could be later in this period (Gibson & Woods, 1997, 72 & 113). The sherd is residual within a context (1054) containing Roman pottery.

Iron Age

Calcite Gritted ware (15)

Production starts in the Iron Age and continues through the Roman period (Gibson & Woods, 1997, 78 – 9; Swan, 1988, 36) and it is thought into the post Roman period (Whyman, 2001). The fabric appears to be fairly consistent throughout this period; described as containing calcite, limestone (Gibson & Woods, 1997, 117 & fig. 68) and even shell (Webster, 1976). Sherds from BUR07 excavations contain much more limestone than; for example, Calcite Gritted ware recovered during various interventions at Cottam some 11 miles further east (Austin, 1999; Richards *et al*, in prep). Most of the Burdale sherds show varying amounts of calcite and limestone inclusions (up to 6 mm) but in a small number of cases no calcite was visible. Two sherds also contained a small amount of shell. Many of the sherds also demonstrate another feature characteristic of this ware in the form of pitting where calcareous inclusions have leached out over time (Gibson & Woods, 1997, 136 & Fig. 89). Whilst the fabric remains consistent there are changes over time notably in terms of form and of manufacture.

Much of the Iron Age pottery in Northern England has been described as representing 'bucket-shaped vessels' with the vessel wall rising to a flap topped rim (*ibid* 73 – 4). From this early form rims on vessels in the calcite gritted tradition become increasingly flared on both jars and cooking pots during the Roman period. Known as Knapton ware after a major production site it develops from the mid 3rd century from being a local 'native' ware confined to East Yorkshire to being widely distributed throughout the north on both military and domestic sites. This transition also involved changes in production from being an open or irregularly fired, handmade ware to a consistently reduced and harder fired one (*ibid* 78 -9; Swan, 1988, 36). Subsequently in the later fourth century Huntcliffe type jars become prominent in the form of a wheel-turned vessel with a very distinctive hooked rim and an internal grooved lid seating (Tomber & Dore, 1998, 201). Another late development appears to be the appearance of dishes in this fabric in late deposits at, for example, Blake Street in York (Monaghan, 1993, 718- 9).

A small group of flat topped rim sherds from BUR07 have been assigned an Iron Age date in that they appear to come from 'bucket-shaped' or straight sided vessels which are handmade and open fired. Their manufacture suggests they are unlikely to represent late Roman dishes which have a similar rim profile. Some body sherds have been assigned to the Iron Age through association with these rims.

Rounded Grit ware (1)

A small group of sherds appear to shadow the development of Calcite Gritted wares from a localised Iron Age tradition through to the flared rims of Knapton Wares prevalent into the later Roman period. Whilst sharing many visual characteristics including calcareous inclusions the sherds here contain significant amounts of light grey rounded and sub rounded grits averaging 1mm in diameter.

A single sherd from a thick walled vessel (as surviving 14 mm) has been assigned to the Iron Age. It appears to be a damaged flat top rim sherd but could be from a base. It is heavily tempered with these rounded grits. Degraded calcareous material and flint fragments are also visible.

Iron Age – Roman

Calcite Gritted ware (52)

The presence of both Iron Age and Roman rim forms in the assemblage make it difficult to date body sherds as both essentially have the same fabric and manufacturing techniques; calcite and limestone temper, coarse, handmade and open fired until later in the 3rd century as described above. In most cases the presence of other Roman wares, pottery from later periods or other cultural material date the context and the question as to whether a sherd is residual Iron Age or Roman is largely inconsequential.

Rounded Grit ware (9)

As described above the fabric contains light grey rounded grits averaging around 1 mm in diameter but occasionally up to 2 mm and degraded calcareous material. The density of rounded grits is significant less than the example assigned to the Iron Age above and closer to a sherd assigned to the Roman period below but when this transition occurs is uncertain.

Roman

Calcite Gritted ware (26)

A number of sherds have the distinctive flare of Knapton rims or exhibit the better manufacturing techniques of later Roman sherds as described above. Some body sherds have been assigned here through association with these rims. One body sherd; SF871, appears to have the letters ST; possibly [E]ST scratched into its surface (Fig. 2). No Huntcliff rims were present in the assemblage although these were noted from the 2006 excavations at Burdale (BUR06; Austin & Jelley, 2009).



Fig. 2 Calcite Gritted sherd with incised lettering

Crambeck Parchment ware (1)

A single base sherd of Crambeck Parchment Ware (Corder, 1989; Evans, 1989, 55; Tomber & Dore, 1998, 197) was identified which is heavily burnt on its outer surface and fracture. The sherd has off white surfaces and a fine white core where visible

with small sub rounded quartz and occasional red iron-rich inclusions. Characteristic red-brown paint spots are visible on the inner surface.

Crambeck Reduced ware (12)

This ware has a hard, wheel-thrown fabric with slightly abrasive, slipped; often burnished, medium grey surfaces and a very light grey core. The sherds are on the whole very abraded apart from a large burnished sherd with the profile of a small carinated bowl. 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 ware (27)

This ware 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; Hayes, 1988: Swan, 1988, 34 & pl xvi: Tomber & Dore, 1998, 158). Seven sherds are irregularly fired showing substantial surface oxidation with grey cores and may represent a localised production before the mid 3rd century expansion.

Ebor ware (5)

A fully oxidized fine sandy orange ware which is wheel thrown. It is hard with an irregular fracture. Visible inclusions include small rounded quartz, occasional red-brown (sandstone, iron rich) fragments, occasional clay pellets and sparse mica (Tomber and Dore, 1998, 199).

Described as a 'legionary' tradition in the past (Monaghan, 1993, 706) with similar orange sandy wares produced, for example, in the legionary pottery and tile kilns at Holt near Chester (Grimes, 1930) these wares are found at other military sites and domestic contexts (Monaghan, 1993, 706). Production is thought to start late in the 1st century through to the early third (Tomber & Dore, 1998, 199) when they are superseded by the Yorkshire reduced wares.

Rounded Grit ware (1)

Here represented by a single hard fired sherd with a distinctive flared rim reminiscent of Knapton Ware. The temper includes moderate amounts of light grey rounded grits averaging around 1 mm in diameter and occasional degraded calcareous material.

Samian (4)

Represented by four sherds the Samian ware (Johns, 1971, Tomber & Dore, 1998, 25 - 45) present is mostly small and very abraded. The exception is a single fresh looking rim sherd which is plain apart from both an internal and external delicately incised horizontal line. Generally Samian wares span the mid 1st - 3rd centuries.

White-slipped wares (2)

The two sherds here appear to have white surface slips. The sandy fabric contains brown (ferrous?) grits and rounded quartz. The first; a base sherd, has evidence of burning. The white slip on the second sherd is patchy probably due to abrasion. This sherd appears to be part of a flagon handle which has a figure of eight cross-section (for example, fig. 293, catalogue no. 2927, Monaghan, 1993). These possibly represent Eboracum ware (Tomber & Dore, 1998, 199 – 200) but a number of white slipped-wares are known regionally and they can be difficult to isolate.

Early Medieval

Organic Marked ware (11)

A coarse handmade ware irregularly fired with surfaces often blackened on both the exterior by soot and an internal residue. The buff to brown groundmass contains moderate amounts of small rounded and sub rounded quartz. Of the rims present one was flat topped and the other a slight out turning crudely done.

The characteristic feature of these sherds is the presence of long thin linear surface voids. Similar sherds have been categorised as grass tempered wares but often with a caveat about the surface distribution of the voids (for example, Mainman, 1993, 568). The sherds from Burdale seem to have been in contact with grass or other organic material before firing.

Organic Tempered ware A (25)

Wares with this fabric 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, 13). The sherds considered here are visually identical to an organic tempered ware; Fabric A, identified in the ceramic assemblage of BUR06. (Austin & Jelley, 2009).

This hand thrown ware has a comparatively soft fabric and generally oxidized (reddish) exterior and interior surfaces where visible in which voids, many linear up to 4 mm long, are visible as are mica particles. Sherd cores are black representing burnt organic temper within the clay matrix. Gibson and Woods note that this 'black zone is the result of incomplete oxidation of the carboniferous matter present in the clay' and representative of open firing (109 – 110, 1997). In general sherds are thick walled; around 10 mm but in one case thickening to 20 mm which probably represents a base. Sherds of sufficient size exhibit a curved profile suggestive of globular cooking pots.

Organic tempered wares are known before the Roman period but seem to disappear and then reappear in the Anglo Saxon period (Hamerow *et al*, 1994, 13). They 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 (*ibid* 15 – 16). A number of the sherds here were found in contexts containing Roman pottery. In

general the sherds are in reasonable condition and unlikely to be a prehistoric residual ware. The exceptions are a group of 18 sherds from context (1036). Many are small and fragmentary and appear to represent the disintegration of a small number of sherds which suggests this pottery does not take kindly to disturbance. Thus the other sherds are probably primary in most cases and post Roman.

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 where activity is dated to the late 7th – mid 9th centuries (Mainman, 1993).

These sherds then represent Anglian cooking pots with a date range likely to correspond to similar material noted in York.

Torksey type wares (9)

These are hard fired reduced wares tempered with coarse quartz sand which give the sherd surfaces a distinctive pimpled effect characteristic of Saxo-Norman / Anglo-Scandinavian wares such as those produced at Thetford and Torksey. Thetford ware generally has a grey core and surfaces whilst Torksey production appears to have aimed for 'near black surface finish' although both wares; especially Torksey, can evidence irregular firing with partially oxidised surfaces and cores. Torksey ware often has a characteristic red sandwich (oxidised-reduced-oxidised) core (McCarthy & Brooks, 1988, 160-1 & 150-3).

North of the Humber similar sherds have been described as both Thetford type and Torksey type ware. More recently a concordance appears to have arisen to use the latter for sherds not conclusively Thetford ware (Mainman, 1990, 422-5). York, especially Coppergate, has the major assemblages of Torksey type ware north of the Humber. Of Coppergate Mainman notes that Torksey type wares, especially body sherds, in York and Thetford type wares are 'virtually indistinguishable' (*ibid*, 437). However, neutron activation analysis shows that the Torksey type ware in York was produced from a different clay source than that used in Torksey kilns (*ibid*, 436).

Torksey type ware recovered from interventions in Cottam parish some 11 miles east of Burdale have the 'near-black surface finish' of Torksey Ware as described by McCarthy & Brooks (1988, 152). Sherds from Little Westfield Farm have been confirmed through chemical analysis as representing Torksey Ware products from south of the Humber (Vince, 2008) and, although unconfirmed chemically, visually similar sherds from Burrow House Farm (Austin, 1999, 53) may have a similar origin.

Nine sherds from the BUR07 assemblage have been identified as Torksey type ware

Type A: Seven have grey surfaces and core with one having the red-grey-red sandwich effect described above. One sherd (SF 689) has an unusual but diagnostic internally flanged rim from an 'inturned bowl' (McCarthy & Brooks, 1988, Fig. 74: Mainman, 1990, Figs 182 & 183).

Type B: The other two sherds have 'near black' surfaces and core both of which exhibit the sandwich effect. One sherd (SF 858) has diagnostic thumbing applied to the edge of its everted rim (Fig. 3) probably from a bowl (McCarthy & Brooks, 1988, Fig. 74; Mainman, 1990, Figs 180, 181 & 188).

The date range for the York material is thought to be late 9th until declining in the second half of the 11th century when it is replaced by Stamford ware (Mainman, 1990, 426 – 7) which is not present in the BUR07 assemblage. The inturned bowls (noted above) appear confined to the later 10th – mid 11th centuries.



Fig. 3 Torksey Type ware; thumbing rim

York type ware (1)

Like Torksey wares a hard fired pottery tempered with coarse quartz sand but is clearly wheel thrown with pronounced grooves visible on interior surfaces of vessels. An extremely high firing temperature shrinks the clay to leave grits protruding with a 'toad-skin or pimpled appearance'. Irregular firing gives surfaces that are light red to brown to grey with core that are often 'brick red' with a temper probably derived from feldspathic sandstone. The use range is thought to span the mid 9th – mid to late 10th centuries (*ibid*, 400 -1).

Medieval

Humber Ware (6)

Here represented by four body sherds with a mottled pale green glaze and two unglazed including part of a base. They have oxidised surfaces with a characteristic grey (reduced) core. This ware is generally dated to the 13 - 15th centuries (Jennings, 1992, 27 - 29; McCarthy & Brooks, 1989, 242).

Northern Gritty ware (23)

This fabric is off white but with some variation within a small number of sherds through pink to orange, buff or grey which suggests irregular (open?) firing. The groundmass contains abundant, often protruding, grits (up to 2mm); mostly dark but also angular quartz. Mica is also visible in moderate amounts. The sherds exhibit a hackly fracture and are mostly small and abraded, many with evidence of burning or possibly sooting. Some sherds have obvious ribs suggestive of wheel throwing.

These sherds fit the profile of Northern Gritty Ware (*ibid* 141 - 2) which date to the 11th to early 13th c. Jennings describes a similar gritty ware distributed in Yorkshire, Northumberland and Scotland without assigning it to Northern Gritty Ware (1992, 14).

Red Sandy ware (1)

Represent by a single large base sherd which has pale or olive green glaze on its inner surface. It has a fine sandy fabric. Jennings describes a Red Sandy ware found in York with an iron based glaze which makes it much paler than copper based glazes (Jennings, 1992, 22 – 24 and 44 – 45). This sherd appears to be part of this 13 – 14th century tradition.

Staxton / Potter Brompton type ware (45)

Defined by Brewster (1958) this is a coarse heavily sand tempered fabric which is abrasive to the touch with often large angular inclusions. These variously include limestone (McCarthy & Brooks, 1989, 237), calcite (Brewster & Hayfield, 1992, 75) and ‘tiny grains of chalk’ at Potter Brompton (*ibid* 54). Additionally pellets of grog are noted (*ibid*). It is irregularly fired generally with oxidised surfaces but often with ‘reduced blue-grey cores’ (Hayfield, 1988, 95). Vessels are now thought to be mostly ‘coil-built and wheel-finished’ (*ibid*). Forms are dominated by cooking pots (jars and bowls) but include other forms such as jugs. Production is thought to span the mid 12th to 15th century (Brewster & Hayfield, 1992; McCarthy & Brooks, 1989, 237 – 8).

The sherds at Burdale all have oxidised orange surfaces and grey reduced cores. From available rim forms they appear to represent cooking pots which are unglazed (A) apart from five glazed sherds (B) and seven that appear to be a coarser version (C) of the fabric. Three of the glazed sherds are from shallow broad based bowls; so called ‘peat pots’. These, representing at least two vessels, have a distinctive profile where the vessel wall is inverted in relation to the base. Staxton / Potter Brompton glazes have been described in general as ‘thick, nasty, and heavily corroded’ (Brewster & Hayfield, 1992, 65). The thick brown glaze on the Burdale sherds survives intact apart from the single body sherd where it is flaking badly. In consequence more of the sherds may have been initially glazed. In general the Staxton / Potter Brompton sherds are small and abraded.

Post Medieval (3)

All three sherds are from topsoil and were not studied in detail but appear pre 20th century perhaps representing manuring.

Unidentified (28)

A group of generally small and very abraded sherds that could not be identified.

Summary

Table 1: Overview of the pottery from Burdale 2007

Period	Fabric	no. sherds	%
Bronze Age	Beaker	1	0.32
	Bucket Urn	1	0.32
sub total		2	0.65

Iron Age	Calcite Gritted ware	15	4.85
	Rounded Grit ware	1	0.32
sub total		16	5.18
Iron Age/Roman	Calcite Gritted ware	52	16.83
	Rounded Grit ware	9	2.91
sub total		61	19.74
Roman	Calcite Gritted ware	26	8.41
	Crambeck Parchment ware	1	0.32
	Crambeck Reduced ware	12	3.88
	East Yorkshire Grey ware	27	8.74
	Ebor ware	5	1.62
	Rounded Grit ware	1	0.32
	Samian	4	1.29
	White-slipped wares	2	0.65
sub total		78	25.24
Early Medieval	Organic Marked ware	11	3.56
	Organic Tempered ware	25	8.09
	Torksey type wares	9	2.91
	York type ware	1	0.32
sub total		46	14.89
Medieval	Humber ware	6	1.94
	Northern Gritty ware	23	7.44
	Red sandy ware	1	0.32
	Staxton / Potter Brompton type ware	45	14.56
sub total		75	24.27
Post Medieval	Various	3	0.97
Unidentified		28	9.06
total		309	100.00

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

Almost all of the possible prehistoric pottery is demonstrably residual or from topsoil. The exceptions are two body sherds of Calcite Gritted ware assigned to the Iron Age / Roman periods for the reasons noted above. Both of these sherds whilst not clearly residual are from contexts described as dumps (1257 & 1387) and are thus redeposited.

The assemblage suggests; not necessarily contiguous, activity from early within the Roman through to the later Medieval period.

The continuing use of 'native' or locally produced Calcite Gritted wares in the Roman period is confirmed by the presence of Knapton style rims. A small amount of non local pottery including Samian, Ebor and White Slipped wares was also present which like the local wares represents activity into the 3rd century. Within this century the industries supplying much of the north emerge with mass produced Calcite Gritted, East Yorkshire Grey and Crambeck wares present in the assemblage.

The possibility that the production of Calcite Gritted ware continued into the post Roman period has been discussed above but the first clear evidence of activity indicated by the pottery assemblage is the presence of Anglian period Organic Tempered and Marked wares of the late 7th – mid 9th centuries. Much of this material appears to be associated with the backfilling of a sunken-feature building in Enclosure 6. The Anglo-Scandinavian period is represented by a small group of Torksey type sherds and a single sherd of York type ware. The Torksey sherds were mainly found in test pitting to the north of the main excavation.

A substantial amount of medieval pottery was recovered during the excavation. Northern Gritty Ware is prominent in the assemblage with production thought to start in the later 11th through to the earlier 13th century as is locally produced Staxton / Potter Brompton wares which are generally thought to have been produced between the mid 12th and the 15th centuries. A small number of Humber ware sherds (13 – 15th centuries) were identified as was a single sherd of glazed Red Sandy ware (13 – 14 centuries). Much of the Medieval assemblage was recovered from topsoil but by no means all.

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