IV

New thoughts on the chronology of Saddler Street, Durham: pottery, leatherwork and some implications

Alan Vince and Quita Mould

with contributions by Ian Riddler

SUMMARY

A re-examination of the evidence for the dating of the 1974 Saddler Street, Durham, excavations, based mainly of the leatherwork and non-local pottery, suggests that the first occupation of the site took place after the Norman Conquest rather than in the 10th century and that a Durham origin for 'Durham ware' is at best unproven, with Newcastle upon Tyne being a more likely source. The implications of this re-interpretation for the history of the pottery industry in northeast England are explored.

INTRODUCTION

In 1974, excavations took place on the site of three properties fronting onto Saddler Street, Durham, located at the base of the castle mound on its north side (Carver 1979). The excavations revealed a sequence of horizontal deposits and cut features which in the absence of strong artefactual evidence were dated by a series of C14 determinations, with a suggested starting date in the 10th century and an end date in the later 12th century.

The results of these excavations have been used by Carver and others to indicate that urban settlement at Durham started in the pre-Norman period (Period 1), perhaps immediately following the transfer of the bones of St Cuthbert from Chester-le-Street to Durham. A re-organisation of the site into three tenements (Period 2), which survived as distinct properties into the 20th century, was tentatively dated to the late 11th century (Carver 1979, 71). Period 1 ended with the destruction by fire of Structure 4 and it was suggested that this might have taken place as part of the Harrowing of the North in 1069–70. The reorganisation of the site into three tenements was suggested to have been the work of Ranulf Flambard, Bishop of Durham between 1099 and his death in 1128.

In the intervening decades since these excavations were published, the Saddler Street sequence has not been replicated and only a few sites in Durham have produced material of similar date, unfortunately without the detailed stratigraphic context of the 1974 excavations. However, the archaeological context of the Saddler Street finds is now somewhat clearer and this paper is an attempt to re-evaluate some of these finds, principally the pottery and leatherwork, and to suggest a revision to the published chronology.

RADIOCARBON DATING

The dating of the Saddler Street sequence proposed by Carver in 1979 is based primarily on a series of C14 dates obtained from a range of materials. Six determinations were obtained (Carver 1979, Fig. 11), spanning the surviving stratigraphic sequence. One of these centred on the 9th century (HAR-601) whilst three centred on the 10th century (HAR-827, HAR-829 and HAR-602), two centred in the 11th century (HAR-826 and HAR-599) and one centred in the 13th century (HAR-828). The latest of these dates was from the wattle lining of one of the latest features, F35, but there was no correlation between stratigraphic sequence and date for the remaining samples, none of which come from structural features. If only those samples which came from structural elements were included then there was a correlation, with the earliest structure, S1 and the earliest of two storm drains, S14, both having dates which are earlier than that for the replacement drain, S15, which in turn is earlier than the date for the wattle lining of F35. Examining these dates using the most recent calibration curve (Intcal04: Northern Hemisphere, Reimer et al. 2004) and applying a Bayesian statistical model to those structural features (Bronk Ramsey 1995; Bronk Ramsey 2001) leads to the following conclusions:

- There is a 68% probability that occupation (S1 and S14) started at some point between 941 and 1121, in calendar years.
- There is a 68% probability that the construction of drain S15 took place between 1045 and 1167, in calendar years.
- There is a 68% probability that F35 was constructed between 1179 and 1297, in calendar years.

The C14 dates therefore allow a pre-conquest date for the start of the sequence but it is unlikely that a wattle-lined drain (S14) would be in use for more than a few decades before replacement and therefore it is likely that the start of occupation is early 11th century at the earliest with a strong possibility that the entire sequence is post-conquest.

POTTERY

The pottery from Saddler Street was originally studied by L. Addis and a summary of her work was published by Martin Carver. Various features of the pottery suggested that it was the product of a local industry producing splash glazed and unglazed wares and a crucible fragment from the site was also identified as being used in the production of lead glaze (Carver 1979, 39 SF48/1574). The crucible sherd could not be found in the Fulling Mill museum in 2006 but is described as being from a flat-based vessel with a thick green glaze on the underside and a grey residue on the interior which included a pellet of lead.

All of the stratified pottery was re-examined in October 2002 using a x20 binocular microscope and a sample of sherds was taken for thin section and chemical analysis. This analysis confirmed that the pottery was, in the main, of north-eastern English origin, containing a mixed sand of Coal Measures and Permian origin. A single sample of daub was also analysed.

The results of these analyses indicate that both the daub and the majority of the pottery fabrics contain a mixture of sandstone fragments, quartz grains of Permian origin, quartz grains of possible Millstone Grit origin and light-firing mudstones. However, only the pottery samples contain fragments of igneous rock of erratic origin (mostly fine-grained basic igneous

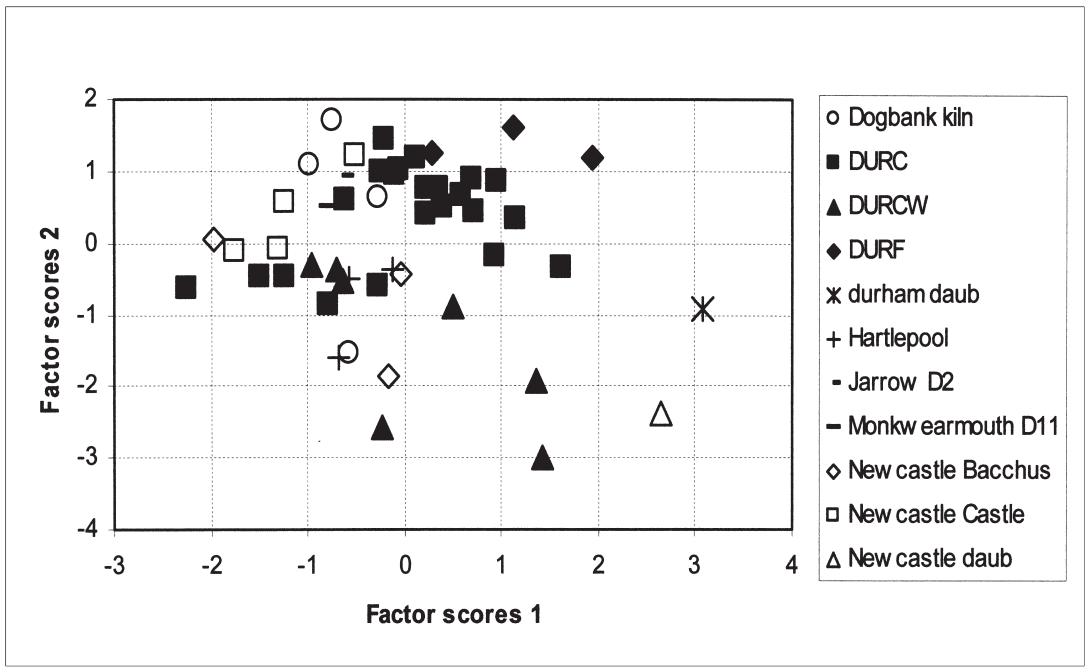

Fig. 1

rocks and volcanic glass, some with phenocrysts of feldspar). Furthermore, the groundmass of the daub and the pottery have different textures, with the daub having abundant quartz of fine sand grade. By contrast, samples of vessels of similar visual appearance from domestic occupation sites in Newcastle upon Tyne and the monastery at Monkwearmouth and the kiln site at Dog Bank, Newcastle upon Tyne, have the same groundmass as the Saddler Street pottery.

The Saddler Street Durham ware samples could be divided into three groups on the basis of characteristics in thin section; the standard fabric contains a coarse mixed sand (DURC); a variant contains the same sand but the groundmass has a low iron content, giving an off-white colour to oxidized vessels (DURCW) whilst a few samples contained few if any coarser sand inclusions and were coded as DURF (fine) and DURVF (very fine). The waste from the Dog Bank kiln site includes examples similar to the DURC and DURCW groups.

The chemical composition data, the result of Inductively Coupled Plasma Spectroscopy carried out at Royal Holloway College, London, under the supervision of Dr J. N. Walsh, were analysed using Factor Analysis, a multivariate statistical technique which attempts to replace multiple variables by a smaller number of Factors whilst allowing the contribution of each element to the Factors to be determined. This analysis indicates that there are differences between the compositions of the DURC, DURCW and DURF/DURVF groups which form overlapping clusters in fig. 1 which have different means. However, there are no overall differences between the samples from Durham, Newcastle, Monkwearmouth, Jarrow or Hartlepool, although ideally much larger numbers of samples from these other sites would be

analysed (fig. 1). A sample of daub from the castle at Newcastle upon Tyne does not match any of the pottery or the Saddler Street daub.

The stratigraphic position of the Durham ware vessels is shown in table 1 (Nosh = Number of sherds; NoV = number of vessels). Multiple sherds from a single vessel (sherd families) occur in Period 1.2 (Midden 1), Period 2.1 (oven rakings from Structure 5) and Period 2.4 (Midden 4). These sherds at least can be taken to be contemporary refuse.

The Durham ware sherds from Period 1 contexts are mostly from vessels which were probably coil-built but were then finished off on a turntable (table 2, HM = handmade, WF = turntable finished). Body and base sherds of the latter vessels would show no sign of turntable finishing. Sherds from definitely wheel-thrown vessels first occur at the end of Period 1 and were still a small proportion of the pottery found throughout Period 2.

Most of the sherds show no signs of glaze but 84 sherds had splashes of plain lead glaze, 9 had traces of glaze but the sherd was too small to tell if the glaze was splashed or continuous and four sherds came from vessels with a glossy amber glaze, produced by the addition of small quantities of iron to the glaze (table 3). The latter have a similar appearance to vessels produced in the Meuse valley (Huy-type ware and Andenne-type ware, Borremans and Warginaire 1966; Young and Vince 2006) but their fabric at x20 magnification was the same as that of other Durham wares (none were taken for thin section or chemical analysis). Only splash-glazed sherds occur in Period 1 and these form 12.43% of all Period 1 sherds (11.11% by vessel) compared to 25.73%/25.12% in Period 2. All the amber glazed sherds and indeterminate glazed sherds came from Period 2 deposits.

Where a form could be established, jars were by far the most common vessel type used in both Periods 1 and 2 (table 4). A single dish and one definite and one possible pitcher sherd were present in Period 1 deposits (the dish came from Midden 1 and the pitcher sherd(s) from Midden 2). The proportion of pitcher and possible pitcher sherds was greater in Period 2, which also produced a bowl and a small jar. The proportion of pitcher sherds definitely increased within Period 2, being mostly from the fill of Structure 8, the Vennel and Midden 4.

Sherds of non-local origin were rare and consist of a sherd of glazed Stamford ware from the backfill of drain S15 in period 1; a sherd from a Thetford-type storage jar from Midden 3; sherds of Coal Measures whitewares from Structure 5 in Period 2 and a sherd of Developed Stamford ware from Midden 5 in Period 2.

The Stamford ware sherd was submitted for ICPS analysis and has a composition similar to that of post-conquest waste from Stamford (from the Pantiles site, Kilmurry 1980, 49–53, Fig. 11, datable from its typology to the mid/late 12th century) and that of samples of Developed Stamford ware and could be distinguished from the composition of pre-conquest Stamford ware (from Wharf Road, Mahany and Simpson 1982, 90–104 and the Castle kiln, Kilmurry 1977). The production sites which match the Durham sherd lie on the north-west side of the Anglo-Scandinavian settlement at Stamford whilst the earlier ones lie to the south-west (Castle) and south-east (Wharf Road). This result is consistent with the thin drab glaze, which is also mainly a late 11th to mid 12th-century feature. The Developed Stamford ware is of late 12th century or later date and was not sampled.

The Thetford-type ware was also analysed. It comes from the lower body of an unglazed greyware vessel, probably a large jar, with a sagging base and the beginnings of an applied strip or possibly handle attachment. Such vessels were produced in East Anglia and used as storage jars. Some have spouts and handles and were possibly used for storing and/or transporting liquids (Leah 1994).

Table 1 Comparison of sherd counts by phase: top right corner = number of sherds; bottom left corner = percentage of total sherds for each phase, by weight

period	Data	DURC	DURCW	DURF	DURVF	Grand Total
1.1	Nosh	9		1		10
	NoV	9		1		10
1.2	Nosh	132		14	1	147
	NoV	16		8	1	25
1.3	Nosh	1	2	2		5
	NoV	1	2	2		5
1.4	Nosh	8	1	1	1	11
	NoV	8	1	1	1	11
1.5	Nosh	9		3		12
	NoV	9		3		12
2.1	Nosh	29	5	4		38
	NoV	15	5	4		24
2.3	Nosh	16	2			18
	NoV	16	2			18
2.4	Nosh	129	49	6		184
	NoV	125	37	6		168

Table 2 Table of approximate equivalent phasing for 3 large published Newcastle assemblages

period	Data	HM	WF	WT	ND	Grand Total
1.1	Nosh	8	2			10
	NoV	8	2			10
1.2	Nosh	119	28			147
	NoV	16	9			25
1.3	Nosh	4	1			5
	NoV	4	1			5
1.4	Nosh	8		2	1	11
	NoV	8		2	1	11
1.5	Nosh	10	2			12
	NoV	10	2			12
2.1	Nosh	31	4	3		38
	NoV	19	2	3		24
2.3	Nosh	14	2	2		18
	NoV	14	2	2		18
2.4	Nosh	166	5	11	2	184
	NoV	150	5	11	2	168

Table 3 Fabric Descriptions

period	Data	AMBER	GL	PLAIN SPLASHED	UNGLAZED	Grand Total
1.1	Nosh				10	10
	NoV				10	10
1.2	Nosh			20	127	147
	NoV			4	21	25
1.3	Nosh			2	3	5
	NoV			2	3	5
1.4	Nosh			1	10	11
	NoV			1	10	11
1.5	Nosh				12	12
	NoV				12	12
2.1	Nosh		1	3	34	38
	NoV		1	3	20	24
2.3	Nosh	3		5	10	18
	NoV	3		5	10	18
2.4	Nosh	1	8	53	122	184
	NoV	1	8	44	115	168

Table 4 Fabric Descriptions

Form	1		2	
	Nosh	NoV	Nosh	NoV
JAR	181	59	193	170
DISH	1	1		
JAR?	1	1		
PTCH?	1	1	6	6
PTCH	1	1	14	9
?			1	1
BOWL			1	1
JAR/PTCH			7	7
JUG			2	2
JUG/PTCH			16	14
SMALL JAR			1	1

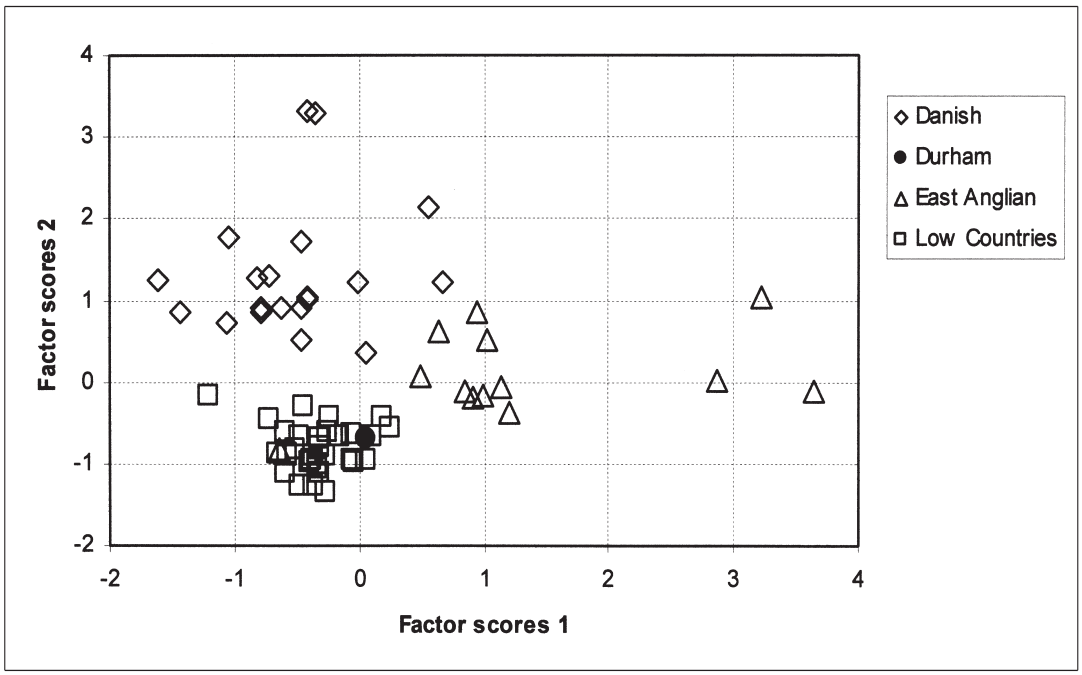

Fig. 2

A thin section indicates that the quartz sand temper includes rounded calcareous grains, fresh angular flint fragments as well as rounded brown-stained flint grains and is consistent with an East Anglian source. However, this petrology is also consistent with a Danish or Low Countries origin, or parts of the southeast of England. Chemical analysis suggests that the vessel might have a Low Countries origin (fig. 2). The material which groups with the Durham sample includes Low Countries Greyware, Dutch Red Earthenware, and Flemish highly decorated ware (including samples from Bruges, Ieper and Aardenburg). However, another English find which plots with this group is a Thetford-type ware sherd from Barton-upon-Humber, for which again an East Anglian source was suggested on petrological grounds. Thetford-type ware sherds with similar inclusions, interpreted as being Grimston products, occur predominantly on coastal sites in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire but have not previously been identified on sites in the north-east.

The Coal Measure Whiteware vessels are typical of vessels made from outcrops of Coal Measures seatearth. Such vessels were produced at Aldin Grange, Bearpark, 3 miles to the north of Durham, but undoubtedly there were numerous sources for this ware from the later 12th century onwards. One of the sherds came from a jar and the other from a small wheel-thrown plain glazed dish with a knife-cut base. The non-local sherds suggest that Period 1 dates to the later 11th century whilst the later phases of Phase 2 date to the mid to late 12th century.

LEATHERWORK

Consideration of the published record suggests that none of the non-ceramic finds from Period I need pre-date the conquest and appear to fit comfortably into the second half of the 11th and the 12th centuries. The leather, in particular, provides some independent dating and a scan of the material found nothing to contradict a later 11th–12th century date. The construction, styles and decoration of the shoes seen were compatible with this general dating. Most of the shoes were drawstring fastening ankle shoes with one-piece uppers joining with a single side seam, as one would expect for the period. Two shoes came from the earliest deposits Period 1 Phase 1. The first, formerly described as a 'slipper' (192/1770), while having the initial appearance of a mule, appears to be the discarded remains of the front part of a shoe, the result of a cobbler salvaging leather for re-use. The second, the 'sandalised' shoe with openwork decoration on the vamp, that part of the shoe upper covering the front of the foot (190/1751), has an outward curving pointed toe suggesting that it can not date earlier than the very end of the 11th century. This toe style has been linked to court fashions in the reign of William II, 1087–1100, on the basis of comments by William of Malmesbury on the long hair, effeminacy and pointed shoes of the courtiers (William of Malmesbury 1998). In London the style had fallen out of fashion by *c*. 1150 (Grew and de Neergaard 1988, 11). The openwork decoration on the vamp is an unusual feature at this date and nothing comparable of generally similar date appears to have been found from excavation in this country. It implies the shoe was an expensive item of dress, possibly more likely to derive from a member of the aristocracy or clergy than the tenement dweller. The shoe was recovered from the fill of drain S15, which was sealed by midden 3. This suggests that the shoe dates to the earliest use of this type, in the later 11th century, and possibly later than William II's accession in 1087.

Other aspects of the leather from Period 1 support the later 11th century dating. The shoes have round-seated soles sewn to the uppers with edge/flesh seams. The upper (9/1507/766472), from Period 1.4, originally considered to have belonged to a shoe with a sole with a V-shaped heel extension was subject to re-interpretation. On inspection it could be seen that the one-piece upper of bovine leather could have wrapped around the foot and joined with a side seam. The upper with additional inserts, as seen on several other shoes in the assemblage, making an ankle shoe for a round-seated sole rather than being seamed to a V-backed heel extension of the sole, as previously depicted (see fig 17 and diagram in fig 20 period 1). No shoe soles with tunnel stitched seams or V-shaped heel extensions are present, each being features of shoe construction commonly found at York during the 10th and early/mid 11th century (Mould, Carlisle, and Cameron 2003, 3268–70 and table 370; 3274) but rarely found thereafter. In London the tunnel-stitched sole seam and the V-shaped heel extension persisted to the end of the 11th century (Pritchard 1991, 220–9). Comparison with the London material on these criteria, therefore, could push the dating of the Saddler Street shoes slightly further forward into the 12th century. Amongst the shoe parts from Period 1 Phase 2 was a decorated, flat, topband (33/1589) with a series of parallel slits through which a decorative thread had been threaded originally. Decorated top bands, like embroidered toe stripes running down the shoe vamps, are found on shoes of later 11th-early 13th century date. Embroidered toe stripes were present on three shoes, one from Period 2 Phase 6, and two from Period 3. While this type of decoration has a very long history, it appears to have been at its most popular during the first half of the 12th century in London (Pritchard 1988, 77). The amount of shoe

uppers of sheep/goatskin was also notable, including both those from Period 1 Phase 1. The increased use of sheep/goatskin in shoemaking is again a feature of late 11th-early 13th century footwear assemblages (Mould, Carlisle, and Cameron 2003, 3265).

One of the sheaths (177/1741/766500), from Period 1 Phase 5, is of distinctive type recently recognised as being closely dated the second half of the 11th and larger part of the 12th century. Parallels for this sheath come from eleventh-twelfth century contexts at Trondheim, Norway, and Plessenstraße (Schleswig) and Haithabu, Germany (Marstein 1989, fig. 47b, c, d; Van der Walle-van der Woude and Groenman-van Waateringe 2001, Abb.30; Groenman-van Waateringe 1984, Taf. 21). This sheath comes from levelling for the floor of S3 and was therefore probably in use at the time of S2. A shoe upper (105/1639) from Period 2 Phase 1 has an edge/flesh seam at the lasting margin rather than the more usual grain/flesh seam. This shoe construction is seen at London and at York where, though never found in large numbers, it appears to date to the early/mid 12th century (Grew and de Neergaard 1988, 48; Mould, Carlisle, and Cameron 2003, type 3, 3271). This might further support a start date for Period 2 in the 12th rather than the 11th century.

A COMPOSITE COMB

Ian Riddler

A single-sided composite comb from Midden 4 in Period 2 (81/1581) belongs to a type widely distributed across northern Europe, but scarce in England. The lack of any decoration on either side of the comb is characteristic of the type, as is the rectangular form and the cutting of relatively fine teeth (Andersen 1968, 29; Dunlevy 1988, 367–8). Earlier forms have widely spaced rivets and relatively long comb teeth. In later developments the combs are longer, with shorter but finer teeth. The latest variants of the type are often decorated (Riddler and Trzaska-Nartowski, forthcoming). This particular comb belongs with the earlier forms, which are first seen in northern Europe during the mid eleventh century, and continued to be produced during the first half of the twelfth century. Useful dating for the early forms of the type has come from Gdansk, Lund and Schleswig, amongst other sites (Hilczerówna 1961, 95–8 and ryc 38a; Blomqvist 1942, 150 and abbn 139–40; Andersen 1968, 29 and abb 28; Ulbricht 1984, 47–8, abb 29.6 and abb 70). Sequences of these combs are also known from Waterford, and from Dublin, where they were being produced in considerable numbers near the High Street in the mid twelfth century (Hurley 1997, 656 and figs 17.1–2; Riddler and Trzaska-Nartowski forthcoming).

DISCUSSION

Chronology

Martin Carver suggested in 1979, on the basis of the C14 dates, that the Saddler Street sequence started in the later 10th century and that the division between Periods 1 and 2, marked by the establishment of property boundaries which survived until recent times was likely to have taken place in the late 11th to early 12th century. The leatherwork and the Stamford ware sherd, however, suggests that this dating is too early and that S3 (and consequently S4) are post-conquest as is the fill of drain S15. It would still be possible for two structures, S1 and S2, pit F81 and drain S14 to be of pre-conquest date since they produced no pottery or leather finds, but given the nature of their preservation and the use of wattle

walling in both structures and drain S14, it is unlikely that they pre-date the succeeding structures and drain by more than a decade or two. At the earliest, therefore, occupation on Site D appears to have started around the middle of the 11th century. Whilst this does not rule out a pre-conquest date, the likelihood is that occupation started soon after the conquest.

It is impossible to narrow down either the date for the beginning of Period 1 or the date of the fire which destroyed Structure 4 and the subsequent division of the property into three tenements with enough precision to place these events in an historical context but the suggested link between the introduction of the sharply pointed outward pointing toe with the court of William II and its appearance on a shoe from the filling of drain S15, probably rules out the correlation of the Harrowing of the North and the fire which destroyed Structure 4 since three phases of midden separate the filling of this drain and the fire. However, Carver's suggestion that the subdivision of the site into three tenements took place during the rule of Bishop Ranulf Flambard (i.e. before 1128) is quite possible but would allow for an average life-span of structures 1 to 4 of about a decade. Given that these were all wattle structures this does not seem unreasonable. If Structures 2 and 3 were actually contemporary and the filling of S15 correlates with their construction then this lengthens the life-span to an average of 20 years. Period 2 would therefore date to the early to mid 12th centuries, finishing some time after *c.* 1150.

Pottery Use and Production in North East England

The ceramic sequence at Saddler Street is clearly different from that found in York (Mainman 1990; 1978; Holdsworth 1995) where wheel-thrown vessels were used almost exclusively from the 10th century onwards, but is more similar to the sequence seen in East Yorkshire, the midlands, the south-east of England and the Low Countries. At the city of London, for example, handmade globular bodied jars were the norm from the mid 11th century onwards but by the end of the century vessels with squared rims, finished on a wheel, were appearing (Vince and Jenner 1991; Vince 1991). By the middle of the 12th century, these handmade wares had been almost completely superseded by wheel-thrown vessels. Production of pottery by hand continued in several parts of the country throughout the 12th and into the 13th century and its prevalence in Durham ware is therefore a cultural feature rather than a chronological one. Nevertheless, by the end of the 12th century it is likely that most pottery used in the north-east was wheel-thrown.

Of more use as a dating indicator is the presence of splash glaze and, in particular, the spouted pitcher in which the spout is fixed to the rim of the vessel. Such vessels were produced throughout the 10th and 11th centuries at Stamford and a few other centres (such as those producing Winchester ware and York Early Glazed ware, the latter of which is probably of lower Seine origin). In the very late 11th or early 12th centuries the production of splash-glazed vessels, mostly spouted pitchers copying the Stamford products, spread to other centres, such as Nottingham, Lincoln and Beverley, and some of these vessels were handmade with turntable finishing (Young and Vince 2006 NOTSP; LSWA; BEVO). This is probably the context for the Durham ware industry and one of the Saddler Street examples has widely-spaced horizontal grooves on the body, a feature of some Stamford ware vessels.

The small number of amber glazed vessels may be an indication of the influence of Andenne-type ware, although this ware is uncommon in the northeast. Andenne-type ware

is mainly found in England on east coast port sites and occurs in mid/late 11th-century to mid mid12th-century contexts, falling out of popularity with the emergence of local wheel-thrown glazed wares.

Unfortunately, there are no local northeastern pottery sequences which can be compared with Saddler Street and certainly none that can provide any independent dating. Furthermore, few of the associated finds from Sadder Street can be closely dated.

CONCLUSIONS

If Durham ware started production in the later 10th century, as suggested by Carver, it would be difficult to find any parallels for the range of jar forms. Further south at that time there appears to have been little pottery production north of the Humber and both York and Beverley were supplied almost entirely by the Lincolnshire potteries at Lincoln, Torksey and Stamford. By contrast, it is much easier to find a context for this ware if it is of later 11th or early 12th century date.

Even if of post-conquest origin, the Durham ware industry is still of considerable importance for the study of medieval pottery in the northeast of England. It is undoubtedly the earliest proven medieval pottery industry in the region. The only definite Anglo-Scandinavian vessels known from the region are a York A ware vessel and sherds of Stamford ware from Newcastle upon Tyne and the current study of the pottery from the castle excavations there by Jenny Vaughan and Andrew Sage have not found any candidates for pre-conquest locally-made pottery. The chemical analysis of Durham ware suggests that it is of Newcastle origin, a predecessor of the mid/late 12th century Dog Bank ware (Bown 1988) and further suggests that vessels from Monkwearmouth and Jarrow were also made at the same centre.

These samples include a vessel with a brown splash glaze from the castle at Newcastle. The only other splash-glazed Durham ware vessels known to the authors comes from a site at Bishop Cosin's Hall, Durham. One was a jar and the other a spouted pitcher with the spout freestanding on the shoulder rather than applied against the rim as in the Saddler Street examples. Not all of these samples need be of late 11th/early 12th century date. The Dog Bank kiln is dated by archaeomagnetic dating to the later 12th century and the Monkwearmouth sample comes from a vessel with dimpled decoration on the shoulder, a Staxton-type ware feature. Nevertheless, they indicate that there was a tradition of handmade pottery production north of the Tees.

The leatherwork too is much happier in a post-conquest late 11th/early 12th century context and not only provides a probable date for the Saddler Street sequence but also a social context for the shoemaking and cobbling debris. It includes items likely to have been worn and discarded by an elite clientele such as would be found in the cathedral and castle. This too makes a date after the construction of the castle more probable.

Finally, the suggested re-dating of the Saddler Street sequence has implications for the topography of the city. In her paper on possible research topics for urban archaeology in the North of England, the only archaeological evidence that Pam Graves can cite for urban occupation come from the Saddler Street site (Graves 2002, 177–8). Without that, there is at present no archaeological evidence for pre-conquest activity in towns in north-east England. This might be because there was no such activity, and that all of the medieval towns of this region are Norman foundations or later (a view which is consistent with the documentary evidence for borough status (Daniels 2002), but which is partly a result of the lack of

Domesday book coverage, which alone supplies much of the evidence for pre-conquest urbanism elsewhere in England). The other possibility is that the lack of pottery makes it difficult, if not impossible, to identify the archaeological evidence for occupation at the base of a long sequence of later medieval activity.

It is likely that a secular settlement existed at Durham by 1067/8 when the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records that the inhabitants of Northumbria surprised the newly-appointed earl Robert and slew him and 900 of his men inside the "burh" of Durham (Anglo-Saxon Chronicle 1953 s.a. 1067). Whether "burh" here should interpreted as a defended military site, a borough in the medieval legal sense, a town with a complex economy and trading relationships with a surrounding hinterland or simply a term for specific functions of the cathedral complex is debatable. However, in our view it would be unwise to use the Saddler Street site to support any suggestion of pre-conquest activity, urban or otherwise.

On the other hand, the site clearly has considerable relevance to any reconstruction of the early Norman topography of Durham. By the late 11th century it was situated on the only thoroughfare linking the castle and cathedral occupying the top of the hill with the market place below. The subdivision of the original, Period 1, plot into three similarly-sized tenements at the start of Period 2 seems, as Carver suggested in 1979, to have taken place early in the 12th century, probably during the time of Ranulf Flambard. Whether this event is related to any change in the settlement's status or was a private matter is a moot point. In two recent papers, Eric Cambridge has considered the morphology of medieval Durham. In a discussion of churches dedicated to St Oswald he makes a case for the antiquity of Elvet, which, he suggests may have originally been the main settlement in the area which later became Durham (Cambridge 1995). Elvet, he suggests, lost status after the arrival of the monastic community at the site later to become the cathedral and finally became a suburb of Durham. In the second paper, the importance of what might be thought of as medieval suburbs is again emphasised, going so far as to suggest that in the 12th century Durham was originally a polyfocal settlement (or a series of independent settlements) but that the location of the castle and cathedral complex may have served to promote the area surrounding the market place situated below the Castle and to demote the others (Cambridge et al 2001). It would be possible to interpret the Saddler Street sequence using this model as a framework and to suggest that we cannot be certain of the function of the settlement in which the Period 1 plot lay but that the Period 2 subdivision, resulting in narrow tenements where the buildings presumably lay, as they do today, at the frontage, with their gables fronting the street. This layout, indicative of the important of access to the street and the pressure for space, must mean that, at least from early in the 12th century, Saddler Street lay within an urban settlement whose origins reach back before the advent of documentary sources but which should the opportunity arise is capable of illumination through archaeological excavation.

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