

# Westgate Road, Newcastle upon Tyne: Archaeological Investigations at the Former Parcels Office

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## SUMMARY

*This paper presents the results of archaeological investigations undertaken at the former Parcels Office on Westgate Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, which was conducted in advance of the conversion of the listed railway arches and the construction of a new hotel. The archaeological investigations have provided evidence of activity on the site from the Roman period through to the early twentieth century. This evidence suggests that the site was situated on the periphery of the civilian settlement associated with the Roman fort of Pons Aelius. The site was not intensively occupied until the thirteenth century, a period which included small-scale tanning activities and the beginnings of what would become the fully established Westgate Street. Most significantly, the investigations have shown that significant archaeological remains can still occur, even in the most heavily urbanised areas.*

## INTRODUCTION

**I**N 2010, NORTH PENNINES ARCHAEOLOGY LTD were commissioned by Sleeperz Ltd to undertake a programme of archaeological investigation at the former Parcels Office, Westgate Road, Newcastle upon Tyne (centred on NZ 424870 563900; fig. 1). The project was carried out prior to and during the development of the listed railway arches and the construction of a new hotel. The site is situated within a triangular piece of land that was previously in use as parcel offices from 1906 until 1991 and is located within the historic parish of St. John, approximately 50m east of Newcastle Central Station and 100m north of the River Tyne.

The area is well known for its archaeological potential, being situated close to Hadrian's Wall, the Roman fort of *Pons Aelius* and the remains of a medieval castle. The sites location led Jennifer Morrison of the Tyne and Wear Specialist Conservation Team to request a programme of archaeological excavation and monitoring prior to, and during the development. The first phase of work included the excavation of two open areas, which measured 62m<sup>2</sup> and 88m<sup>2</sup>, totalling an area of 150m<sup>2</sup>, and a contemporaneous watching brief on the site of the former Parcels Office. The second phase of archaeological work consisted of a structured watching brief, which monitored all works within the listed railway arches and the installation of new services for the newly constructed hotel.

This paper presents the results of this archaeological work and an interpretation of the evidence in the context of the wider area of the site.

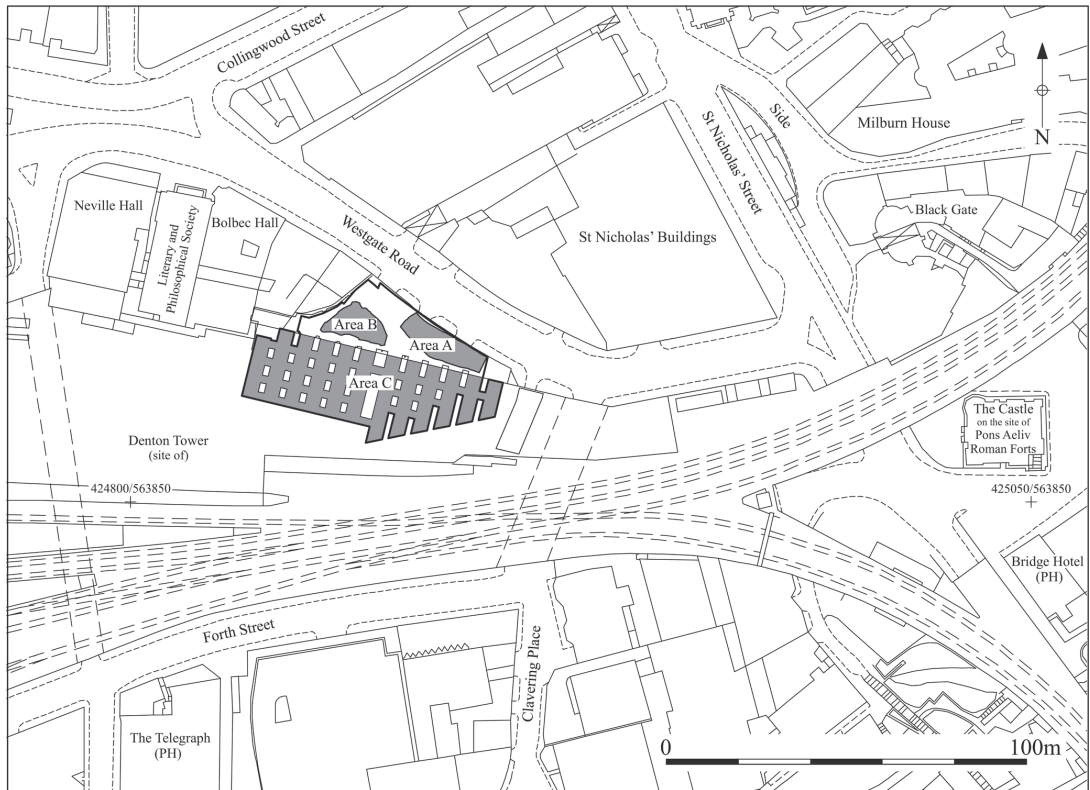


Fig. 1 Site location.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Previous excavations within the vicinity of the site focused upon the area of Castle Garth and its immediate environs, revealing a complex sequence of activity spanning some eighteen centuries (Snape and Bidwell 2002, 1). These excavations found potential pre-Roman Iron Age agricultural activity and early Roman construction debris and ditches, laying below Roman layers associated with the remains of a late second or early third century Roman fort (Inkster & Speak 1997, Snape and Bidwell 2002, 15–24). The remains of the Roman fort of *Pons Aelius* lie below those of the later Norman castle and keep. Various excavations have revealed evidence for the construction and layout of the Roman fort (see Snape and Bidwell 2002), while excavations undertaken in 2009 revealed part of this civilian settlement within the vicinity of Clavering Place (Claydon 2009). Furthermore, excavations conducted within the listed railway arches at 1–8 Westgate Road found evidence to suggest that significant Roman occupation, possibly more of the *vicus*, existed to the east of the former Parcels Office, potentially forming the fringes of the Roman settlement (Goode 2007).

Although the former Parcels Office is situated within proximity of the putative alignment of Hadrian's Wall, the exact line of the wall and its association with the fort of *Pons Aelius* has not always been clear (e.g. Snape and Bidwell 2002, 260–262, Peters and Wooler 2006, 11).

Excavations undertaken in 2004 revealed an offset flagged foundation of the characteristic Broad-Wall construction at the site of the former Hertz Building (McKelvey *et al.* 2004). This, together with an early observation of the Wall ditch at St Nicholas Buildings (Snape and Bidwell 2002, 261), has shown that the line of the Wall extends along the northern side of Westgate Road, immediately north of the Parcels Office site.

During the early medieval period, the area surrounding the castle was no longer associated with the Roman military presence in area, and was instead utilised as a Christian cemetery. Between 1977 and 1992, a total of 660 burials were excavated to the west and north of the castle keep, as well as beneath and to the north of the railway arches (Nolan *et al.* 2010). Dated to *c.* 700 AD, the cemetery may have included a late Saxon chapel or church and appears to have been used as a major burial site until the construction of an earthwork castle in 1080. The construction of the stone keep (1168–1178) almost completely destroyed the main area of the cemetery, though the possible church survived and a narrow strip of the cemetery appears to have been intermittently used for internments into the mid-thirteenth century (*ibid.*). No formalised boundaries have been successfully located for this cemetery and the westward extent has not been identified.

Although a castle had been present at Newcastle since 1080, the town was not enclosed with defensive walls until 1265, with construction completed in the early fourteenth century. The wall had six main gates, including the Westgate, and was strengthened by an external ditch completed in 1316. These features continued to function as the town's main form of defence through the medieval period, and were prominent features of the urban environment to the early nineteenth century.

In the eighteenth century, the main thoroughfare of Westgate Street was aligned through the site, orientated more northwest-southeast than the current Westgate Road and described in 1827 as being inhabited mostly by the clergy and gentry (Peters and Wooler 2006, 15). Much of the site at this time was known as Dawson's Court. Sometime after 1882 the area to the east of the site was demolished to make way for the construction of the railway arches. By 1896 the whole of the site had been acquired by the Newcastle Corporation for the use of the railways. The railway arches, existent to the south of the site (now listed), were constructed by 1891. By 1906 the Parcels Offices had been built, most of the housing previously existent at the site having been finally demolished (*ibid.*).

## METHODOLOGY

The archaeological investigations at the former Parcels Office were undertaken in two phases, comprising an archaeological excavation within the northern part of the site during the first phase and a watching brief within the listed railway arches immediately to the south during the second phase of work. The first phase of work consisted of the excavation of two separate areas, covering an area of approximately 150m<sup>2</sup>. The second phase of work consisted of a structured watching brief during the installation of new services. All modern surfaces and overburden were removed by mechanical excavator to the first archaeological horizon.

For the purposes of this report, the two separate excavation areas investigated during the first phase of work have been labelled Areas A and B and the area of the watching brief undertaken during the second phase of work has been labeled Area C (fig. 1). Context numbers issued for each area have been given the respective suffix of C or D in order to correspond with the original numbering system.

## INVESTIGATION RESULTS

## INTRODUCTION

The archaeological investigation was undertaken during two phases, between October 2010 and September 2011, covering three separate areas of excavation (Areas A–C; fig. 1). Each area revealed closely associated activity. The archaeological results from all areas are discussed together as one site, with the results sub-divided by period. Three broad periods are discussed; Roman, medieval and post-medieval.

## PERIOD 1 – ROMAN

The earliest activity identified during the investigation dates to the Roman period. These remains however, were extremely fragmented because of later disturbance during both the medieval and post-medieval periods. Although only limited Roman remains were identified, these small pockets of activity were dispersed throughout each of the investigation areas suggesting that Roman activity was present across the site (fig. 2).

The best preserved feature was a north to south aligned ditch, which was identified within Area A and noted to continue into the northern part of Area C. The ditch (315C/184D), which had an observed extent of 19.5 m, measured approximately 2m in width and retained two separate fills (285C/314C and 284C) which produced a small assemblage of pottery, including

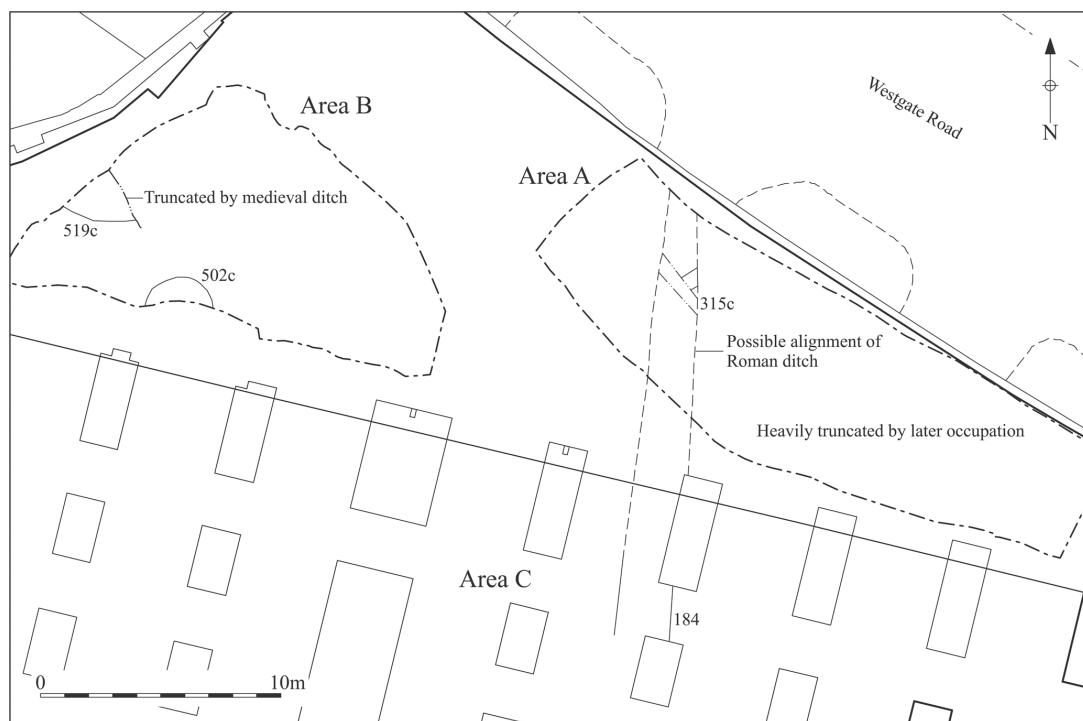


Fig. 2 Evidence of Roman occupation throughout the site.

Samian ware, unidentified grey ware, and Crambeck Type 1b. This latter fabric is especially significant as it is typical of the late fourth century (see below). Although no further features could be attributed to the late fourth century several deposits of Roman date were observed. These deposits included an occupation layer (519C/538C) and buried subsoil horizon (502C) within the western end of Area B and a deposit (150D) of probable Roman date within the northern end of Area C. It appears that the occupation layer 519C/538C represents the earliest evidence of Roman activity on the site, as a small ceramic assemblage recovered from this deposit consisted solely of pottery dating to the late second to early third centuries. The buried subsoil horizon (502C) on the other hand appears to be contemporary with the ditch 315C/184D, producing sherds of fourth century date. The Roman pottery assemblage provided a date range between the late second to late fourth century, suggesting that the occupation of the site was largely contemporary with the main military use of the fort of *Pons Aelius* (Snape and Bidwell 2002). It must be noted however, that no evidence was recovered during the investigations to suggest a direct association with activity within the fort. Given the low incidence of features and finds of this date, it is also unlikely that the Roman activity identified here can be equated with domestic occupation; as found in the civilian settlement identified at Clavering Place to the southeast (Mabbitt 2004, Claydon 2009) and at the eastern end of Westgate Road to the east (Goode 2007).

#### PERIOD 2 – MEDIEVAL

Although the medieval remains identified during the investigations appeared to have been subjected to less disturbance than those of the preceding Roman period, the medieval activity was still confined to isolated pockets within each investigation area. The recovery of over 3000 sherds of medieval pottery however, indicates that the activity during this period was much more intensive than the occurrence of archaeological features would suggest. Two separate archaeological horizons (297C/298C and 283C/242C), which appeared to represent the remains of an early rudimentary road surface were observed within the western half of Area A (fig. 3). The potential road consisted of compact clay and cobble layers which had an observed extent of 7.6m and a width of over 3m. Although the full extent of this road was not observed during the investigation it is likely that the limits of the feature were defined by three intercutting ditches / gullies (348C, 310C and 247C) and a small pit (308C) on its southwestern side and a single narrow ditch or gully (204C) on its northeastern side. All of these features indicate that the road was roughly situated on a northwest to southeast alignment (fig. 3). These features, along with the deposits making up the possible road surface, all produced very similar ceramic assemblages. These were largely made up of thirteenth-century light-firing wares with a lesser number of other wares of mid-late thirteenth-/early fourteenth-century date. It is noteworthy that the location and alignment of the potential rudimentary road is almost identical to that of the later Westgate Street, strongly suggesting that this medieval feature was an early precursor for the later post-medieval thoroughfare.

Within the southern end of Area B, a minimally disturbed area measuring approximately 22m<sup>2</sup> revealed a series of medieval features that may have related to a former small-scale tanning industry on the site (fig. 4). The ceramic assemblage recovered from this area indicates that these features were in use during the mid-late thirteenth/early fourteenth century.

The best preserved features identified within Area B were three large pits located centrally within the area and situated on a northeast to southwest alignment. The central and most

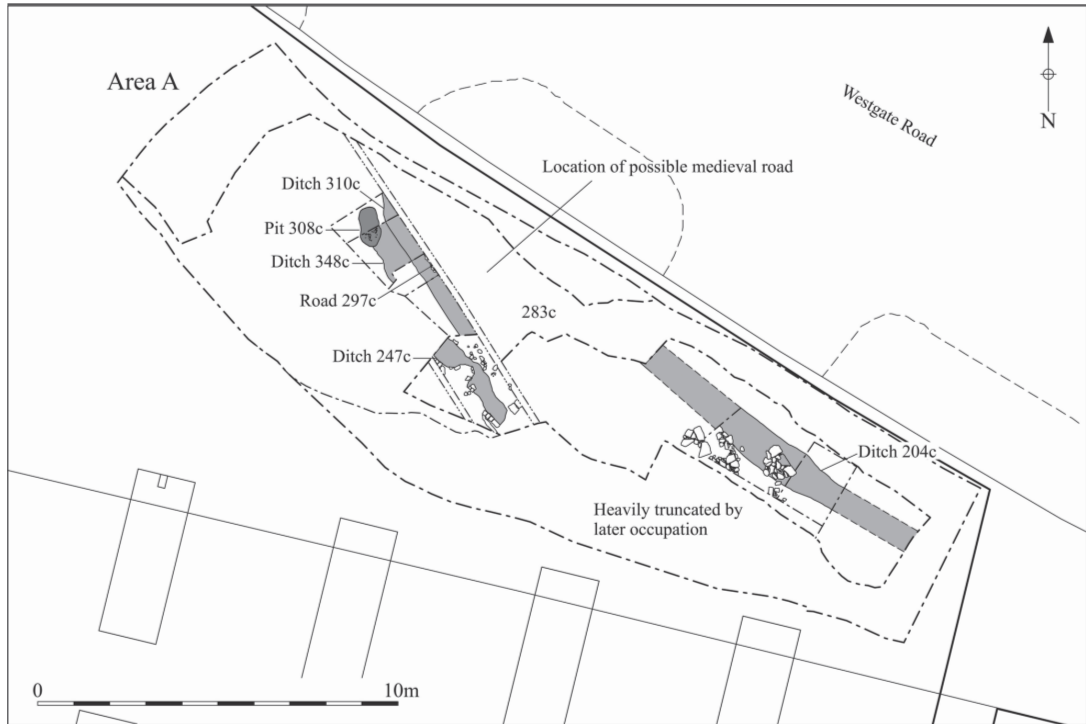


Fig. 3 Medieval remains in Area A.

prominent of these pits (478C) measured 1.35 m in diameter, 0.85 m in depth and retained a straight sided profile with a flat base (fig. 5.2). It seems this pit had originally been lined as degraded wooden remains were identified around the sides and in the base of the feature, which had been sealed by a thick deposit of clay (477C) (fig. 14). The basal fill of the pit consisted of black organic sandy silts (476C), which measured 0.15m in depth and was sealed by a thick uniform deposit of silty clay (475C), which contained sherds of mid-late thirteenth- / early fourteenth-century pottery. A second pit (414C), located at the northeast end of the alignment, measured 1.25 m in diameter, 0.56 m in depth and retained a straight sided profile with an uneven base (fig. 5.3) which had been lined with wooden planks, cobbles (430C/431C) and clay (436C and 452C/480C). The remainder of the fills within the pit were composed of a thick deposit of sandy clay (429C) and separate deposits of silty sands (415C/416C), which produced pottery of mid-late thirteenth- / early fourteenth-century date. The third pit (398C), located at the southwest end of the alignment, measured 1.5 m in diameter, 0.4 m in depth and retained a slightly rounded profile with a flat base (fig. 5.1). Although no evidence of wooden lining was observed within this pit, the base of the feature had been packed with a thick deposit of clay (419C) similar to the other two pits within the alignment. The pit 398C retained two further deposits (413C/397C), each of which produced pottery of thirteenth- / fourteenth-century date.



Fig. 4 Medieval remains in Area B.

A further four large pits (392C/533C/466C/421C) were revealed to the north and west of the three central features, although these had been severely disturbed by later post-medieval activity making interpretation difficult. A sufficient portion of the features survived to establish that they had not been lined (fig. 5.5). This suggests that these additional pits may have had a slightly different function to the three central features, although it is probable that all of the medieval pits identified within this area were associated with the same general activity being undertaken on site. It is probable that this activity was associated with a small-scale tanning industry as the zooarchaeological assemblage from the area showed a bias towards cattle horn-cores and metapodials, a pattern that can be indicative of tanning remains (O'Connor 1984, 28–29). This was particularly evident with the animal bone assemblage recovered from Pit 466C, suggesting that this particular feature was used for the disposal of left over elements from the initial preparation of whole hides. Furthermore, the three central pits retained evidence of wooden and/or clay lining, which suggest the need to retain liquid, and not just store waste material. This adds further evidence to the suggestion that the pits were associated with some element of the tanning process. This type of activity may also explain the variation of pit types within such a small area, as it has been suggested that different types of pits should be expected on medieval tanning sites, including lime pits for removing fat and hair from hides, as well as tanning pits to hold the hides during the tanning

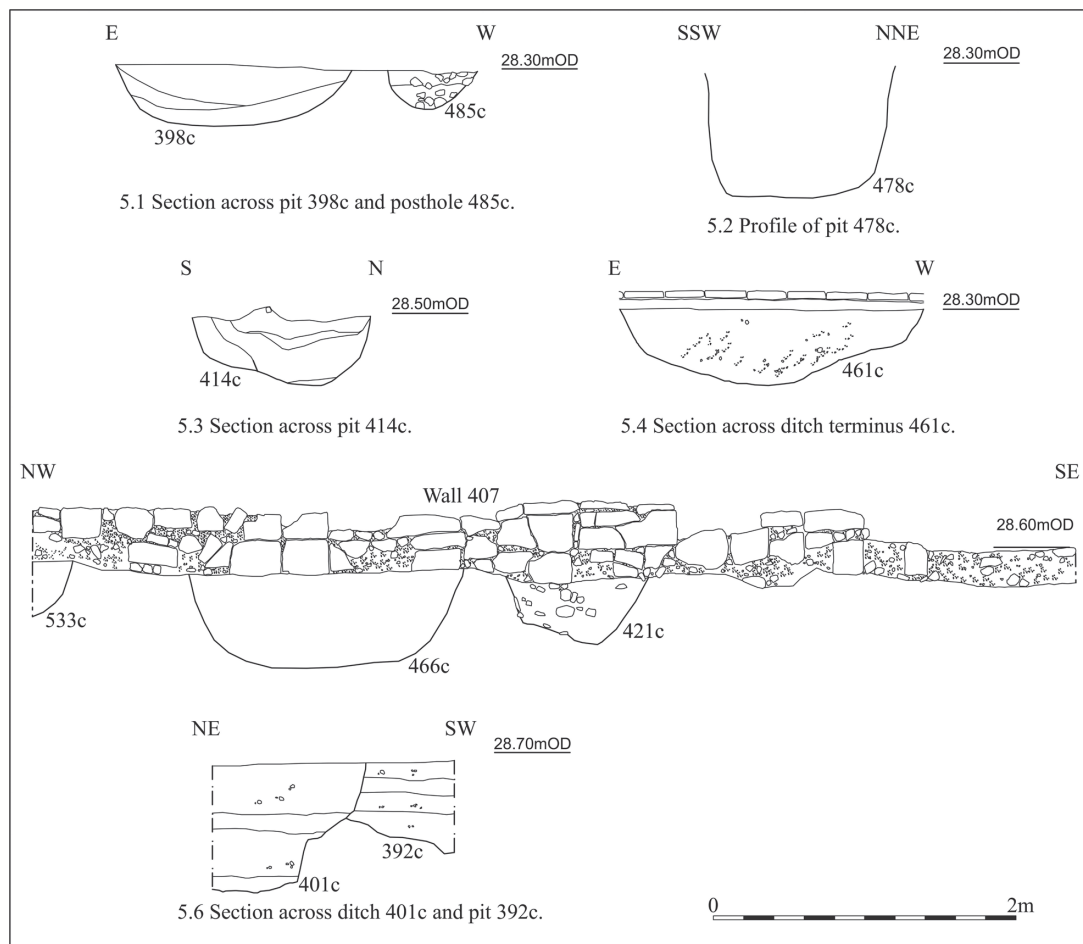


Fig. 5 Sections drawings of medieval remains in Area B.

process (Schofield and Vance 2003, 140). During the construction of the railway arches in the late nineteenth century, the remains of a hand mill were found along with medieval pottery and horn cores (Peters and Wooler 2006, 15). If the association with tanning and horn-cores is accepted then this earlier evidence suggests that medieval tanning activity at Westgate extended beyond the Parcels Office site.

It appears that the tanning industry at the former Parcels Office site may have only been short-lived as a number of changes were evident within the area. Based on ceramic evidence these changes likely occurred during the fourteenth / fifteenth century. Following the cessation of use the large pits appear to have been backfilled as part of a changed function. This was attested to by finds of food plants such as figs, grapes and brambleberries, as well as faecal concretions, indicating the presence of human faecal waste from deposits within the central tanning pits 478C and 414C. These environmental remains and the archaeological context from which they were recovered indicate that whatever their initial use these features ended their functional life as cesspits.



Three post-holes and two ditches appeared to mark the final stage of medieval activity within Area B, some of which truncated several earlier pits (fig. 4). The ditches (401C and 461C), located at the eastern and western limit of the small area of medieval activity, were separated by a distance of over 5m and possibly formed the northern and eastern extents of an enclosed area. The northwest to southeast aligned ditch (401C) at the western end of the area was particularly substantial, retaining a depth of over 0.85m and producing pottery of fourteenth- / fifteenth-century date (fig. 5.6). Located centrally between the two ditches, three evenly spaced post-holes were revealed which were roughly aligned east-northeast to west-southwest. All three post-holes (410C, 485C and 515C) were roughly 0.6m in diameter and all retained the same vertical sided profiles with sandstone packing located within the base. Although these later features possibly represent some form of structural element and enclosure boundary within the area, the evidence is too limited to sustain any detailed interpretation regarding these post-holes. Of some note is the alignment of these features, which are at right angles or parallel to the rudimentary road observed within Area A, suggesting that these features may have formed part of a series of structures and boundaries fronting this earlier thoroughfare. Furthermore, it is likely any structures or boundaries established during the medieval period had a significant influence on the development of properties during the post-medieval period.

Several deposits and a number of features of probable medieval date were also observed within Area C, including a possible linear gully and five pits. However, as within the other two areas of investigation the medieval features had been severely disturbed by post-medieval activity making interpretation difficult. This was further compounded by a general lack of dating evidence with only ten sherds of medieval pottery recovered from the area, although this small assemblage did correspond with the material recovered from Areas A and B, comprising sherds of mid-late thirteenth- to fifteenth-century date. In general terms, little could be established regarding the form or function of these features because of very limited survival and poor excavation conditions. It is possible that at least two areas were used for the deposition of rubbish as both a pit (163C) and the area surrounding a further pit (131C) produced a small assemblage of animal bone and oyster shell. Whilst little could be ascertained regarding medieval activity within Area C it was apparent that most of the potential medieval remains were confined to the northern half of the area. Consequently, it appears the main focus of medieval activity in Area C was located to the north, close to the street frontage, presumably where the possible domestic building was located.

### PERIOD 3 – POST-MEDIEVAL

Within Area A, a possible early post-medieval road surface was revealed (188C/281C), which consisted of large sandstone cobbles and was observed within two separate areas (fig. 6). The alignment of this potential road could not be ascertained, but it did appear to take a slightly more southerly route than the later formalised route of Westgate Street (124C). A late medieval origin cannot be ruled out for this road surface as it overlay several features of thirteenth- / fourteenth-century date. Foundations for several buildings (220C/326C/345C), which appeared to front the road surface (188C/281C) were also observed. There is insufficient archaeological evidence to indicate the construction date of these buildings, although associated finds suggest this is likely to have occurred during the seventeenth / eighteenth century. Furthermore, map evidence confirms the existence of buildings in this location by

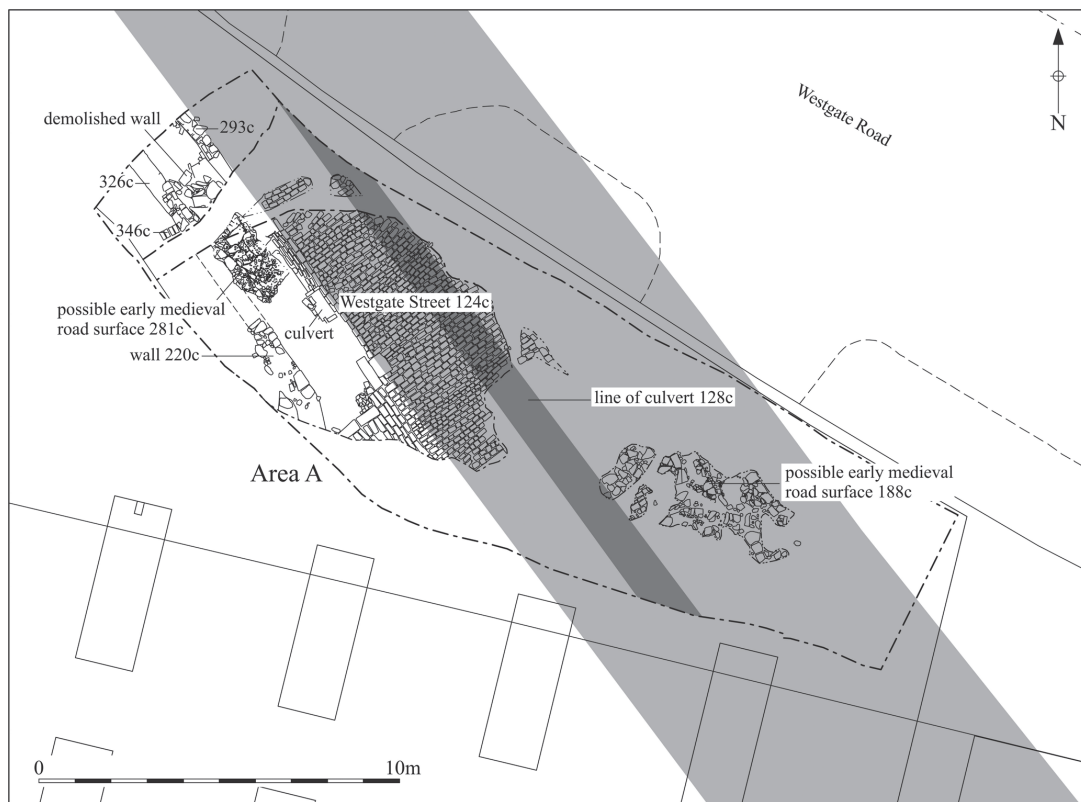


Fig. 6 Post-medieval remains in Area A.

the early eighteenth century (Peters and Wooler 2006). These buildings continued in use until the late nineteenth / early twentieth century, attested to by the addition of several redbrick alterations (293C/346C) and demolition/backfill deposits of this date within the internal spaces of the structures. The identical alignment of the building foundations (220C/326C/345C) to the earlier road surface suggests that these structures replaced earlier, probable timber buildings of medieval/early post-medieval date.

A northwest to southeast aligned culvert (128C), which possibly had early post-medieval origins, was also observed within Area A, situated directly below the later cobbled surface of Westgate Street (124C) (fig. 6). The culvert, which was constructed from roughly hewn sandstone blocks and was capped with large sandstone slabs, had an observed width of 1.1 m and measured over 1 m in depth. A number of separate deposits were noted within the culvert, which produced artefacts ranging in date from the late medieval period to the early twentieth century, although the earliest datable finds are likely to be residual. Later developments in drainage within the area continued to utilise the large culvert 128C with the construction of several redbrick drains (245C/248C/261C). These drains appear to have been built at the same time as the establishment of Westgate Street's cobbled road (124C), which contained shallow gullies feeding into the drains. The nature of the construction of these features suggests mid-nineteenth century urban improvement in roads and drainage. Histori-

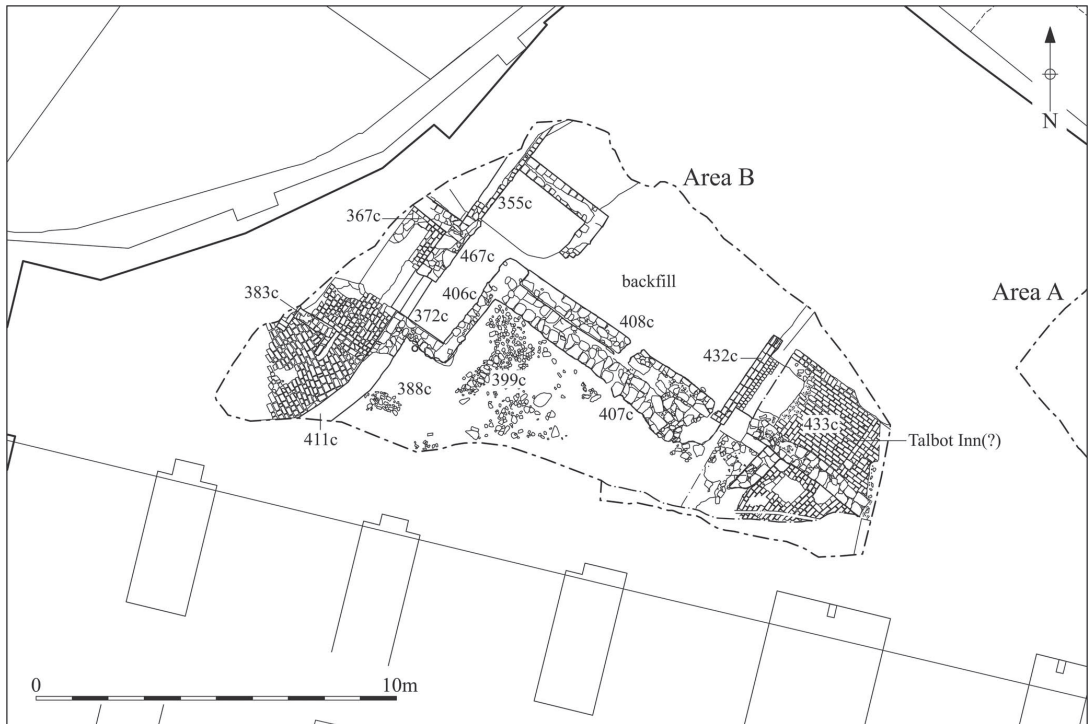


Fig. 7 Post-medieval remains in Area B.

cal mapping reveals this section of road to have been abandoned between 1878 and 1890 when the road was realigned (fig. 15). (It had been renamed 'Westgate Road' in 1873.)

Within Area B, further substantial structural remains were revealed forming the foundations of buildings located around the northwest corner of Dawson's Court which are shown in detail on the First Edition OS map of 1878 (figs. 7 and 9). The most prominent remains consisted of a northwest to southeast aligned double wall (407C/408C) and a northeast to southwest aligned narrow redbrick wall (432C), forming the southern and eastern boundaries of a cellar. Wall 407C/408C was made up of large sandstone blocks and measured 1.5 m in thickness. This substantial double wall construction was employed to support the covered entranceway into Dawson's Court, which is clearly shown within the same location on the 1878 OS map.

Within the western end of the cellar, two walls (367C and 406C) formed a narrow northeast to southwest aligned corridor which led to a stairwell, providing access to two ground floor rooms (figs. 7 and 8). These ground floor rooms were evidenced by an extensive brick surface (373C), which was partially divided by an ephemeral redbrick wall (383C). The northeast to southwest aligned eastern foundation wall (411C) of this building retained an obvious kink which can again, clearly be seen on historic mapping. The area to the east of this wall consisted of an extensive cobbled surface (388C/399C), which would have formed the northwest corner of the yard of Dawson's Court.

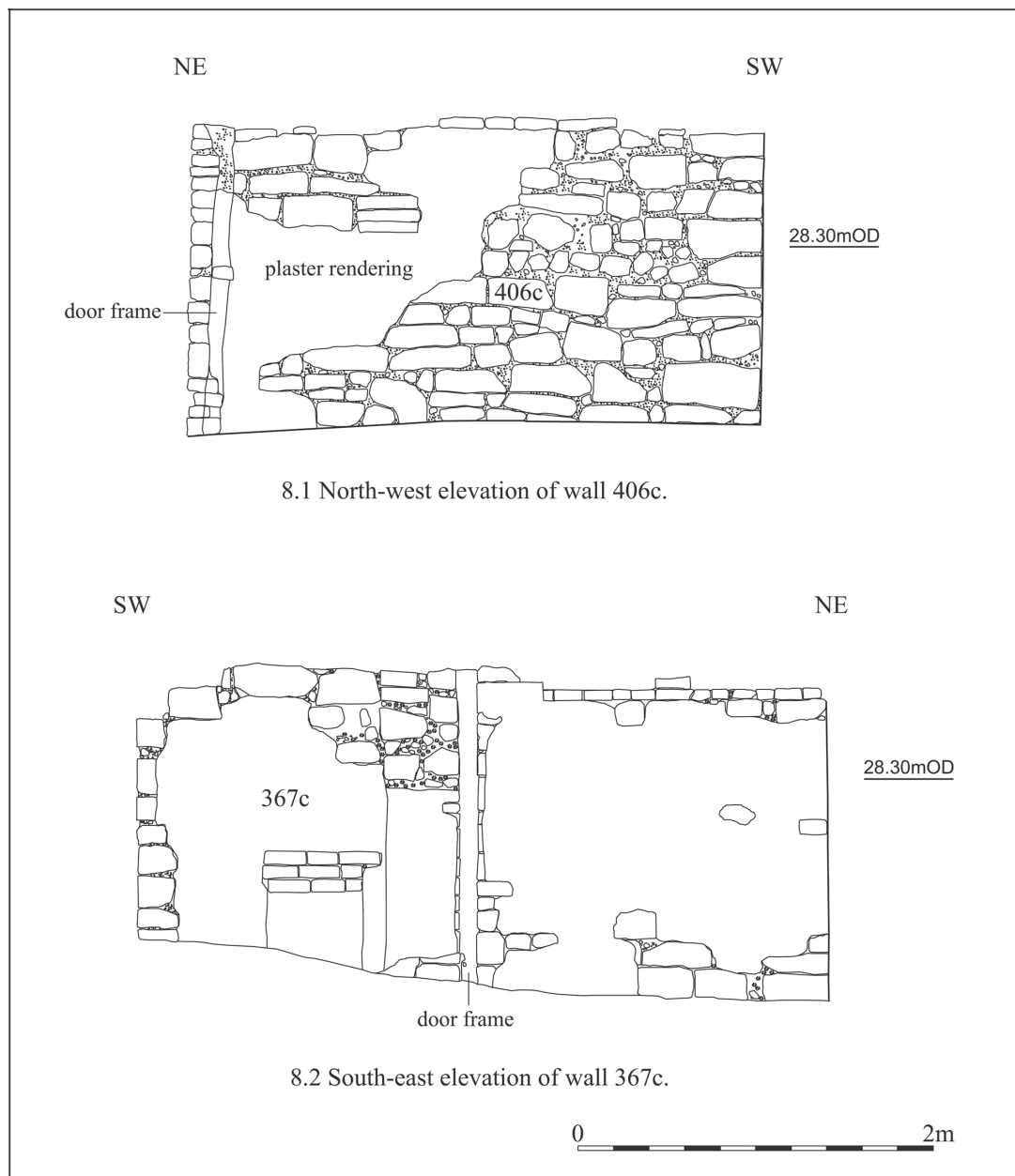


Fig. 8 Elevations of post-medieval walls in Area B.



Fig. 9 The site positioned upon the First Edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1878.

Within the eastern end of Area B, the remains of a further structure were revealed. It is assumed that these remains relate to the former Talbot Inn public house, which is clearly annotated on the 1878 OS map (fig. 9). These remains consisted of a substantial northwest to southeast aligned sandstone centre wall (428C) and the partial remains of a northeast to southwest aligned sandstone return wall (423C). Two separate redbrick floor surfaces (427C and 433C) were also located either side of the main centre wall 428C. All of the remains within Area B had been sealed by substantial rubble deposits, which probably relate to the demolition of the buildings during the early twentieth century.

Within Area C, a series of structural remains associated with buildings fronting the Postern and the southwest end of Dawson's Court were revealed. The limited areas of excavation and later disturbance however, meant the survival of these structures was extremely low with most buildings only being represented by a single section of wall or partial floor surface. Most of the wall foundations closely correspond with the footprints of buildings shown on historic mapping. The best preserved features were located centrally within the area and consisted of a substantial interior redbrick surface (116D), bound to the east by a cobbled surface (113D/115D) and a northwest to southeast aligned exterior wall (112D/114D). Four large sandstone blocks (119D) were associated with this wall, which probably represent an entrance into the building as both outer blocks retained large square holes, likely intended for fixing a lintel.

The remains of at least two cellars were also identified, located at both the northern end and southern end of the area. Both of these cellars consisted of large sandstone and redbrick walls (123D/124D and 122D/130D) with substantial sandstone slab flooring (123D and 129D). Within the southwest corner of the area was a well (134D), which measured 1.6m in diameter and was constructed from a single course of redbrick. The location of this well corresponds with an external yard to the rear of The Locomotive Inn, shown on the First Edition OS map of 1878.

## FINDS

### ROMAN CERAMICS

*Louise Hird and Megan Stoakley*

#### *Introduction*

A total of 123 sherds of Roman ceramics were recovered from 26 contexts during archaeological investigations at the former Parcels Office. The majority of the Roman pottery ( $n = 105$ , 1.950kg) was recovered from Areas A and B, while only 14 sherds (weighing 0.276kg), were recovered from Area C (Noakes 2013, 49, 61). The assemblage was sorted into fabric types and recorded in a database table. The methods used for fabric identification were the online reference material from Tomber and Dore (1998), Gillam (1970, 1976) and Hartley (1977, 2012).

A total of thirteen separate fabric types were identified in the Roman ceramic assemblage from the site. This includes both coarseware and fineware fabrics. The assemblage is also compared to other sites in and around Newcastle upon Tyne to put the site in context within the broader Roman landscape.

#### *Coarseware*

A total of twelve different fabric types were identified in the Roman coarseware ceramic assemblage. Black Burnished Wares of Type Two dishes of Gillam 313 type, dated 180–240 AD are the most frequent type of vessel present, although these examples were all recovered from secondary contexts (fig. 10.2). Dorset Black Burnished Ware Type One (BB1) is much less common and includes a dish (Gillam 329) of late second to fourth century date (fig. 10.3). Black-burnished wares represent traded vessels from the southeast and southwest of England (Potsherd Atlas online 2015) and their presence in this assemblage provides valuable insights into economic patterns between Newcastle upon Tyne and southern trade networks. Black-burnished ware pots were produced in large quantities and used on a daily basis as the standard canteen of both domestic settlements and military camps along Hadrian's Wall; e.g. flanged and plain 'dog-dishes' (figs 10.2 and 10.3) as well as jars (fig. 10.4).

Although Black-burnished wares are recovered frequently in the northwest and along Hadrian's Wall, the recovery of BB1 vessels in Newcastle upon Tyne is infrequent and their inclusion in this assemblage is interesting. Both BB1 and BB2 sherds were recovered during excavations at the Roman fort of *Pons Aelius* although, similarly with this assemblage, only a small quantity of BB1 pottery was recovered (Bidwell and Croom 2002, 153). The distribution of these traded wares would have been aided by the construction of the bridge south of the fort. The presence of Black-burnished ware in this assemblage provides evidence that trade with southern towns and military camps was occurring at this site from the late second

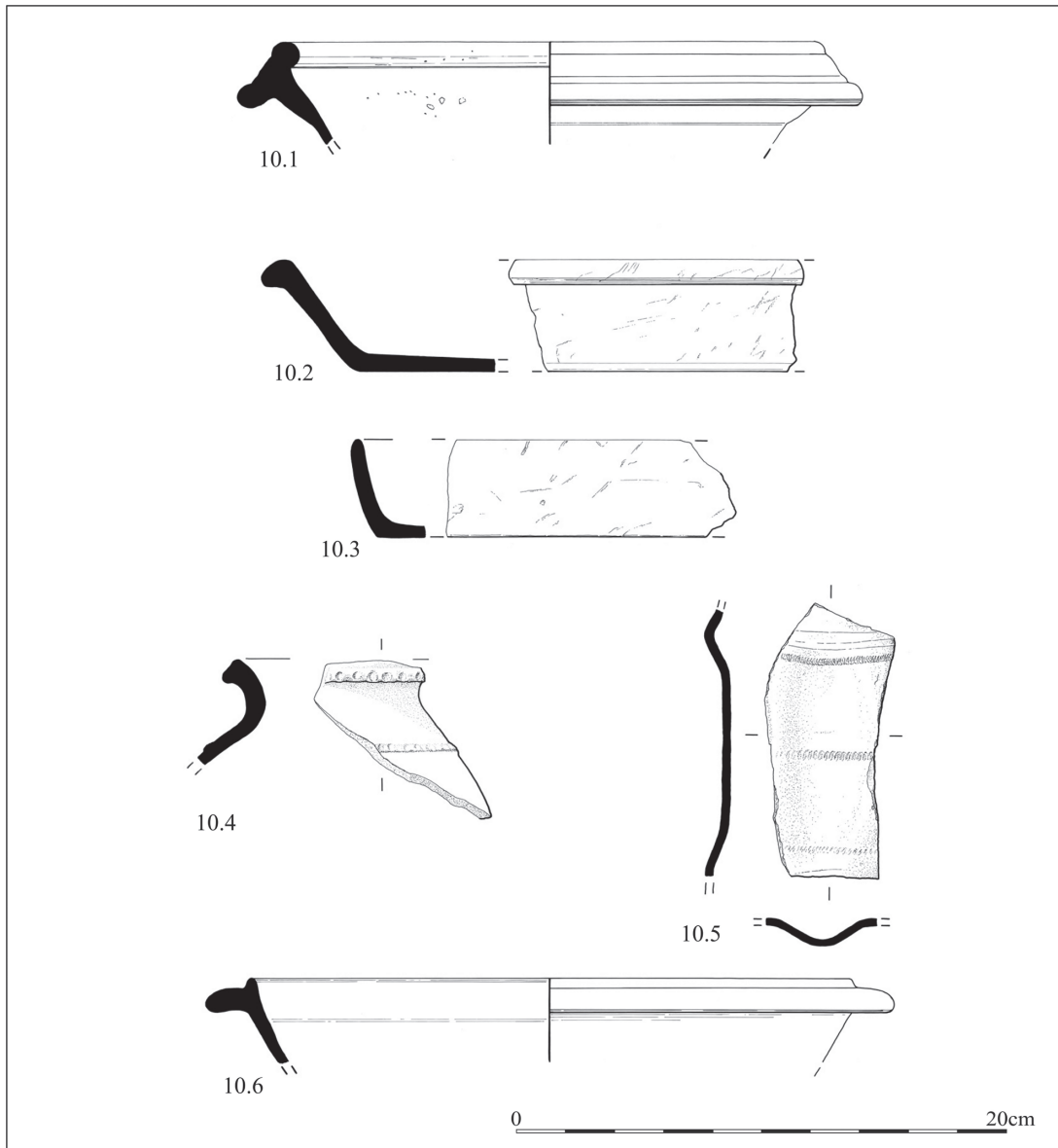


Fig. 10 Roman pottery sherds recovered from contexts: 10.1 (306), 10.2 (122), 10.3 (513), 10.4 (455), 10.5 (187), 10.6 (314).

century to third century onwards, as it was at South Shields (Dore 1979), Denton (Croom 1996, 48) and Corbridge (Gillam 1977, 47).

There are two examples of grey ware vessels which are overfired and are certainly local products. One is a definite waster, a jar with a distorted rim. The second jar has been in use as it is sooted. The sherds of amphorae are all of South Spanish olive oil amphora (Peacock and Williams 1986, Class 25). There is only one sherd of mortarium, found in a medieval context, which is a Mancetter-Hartshill product (Gillam 285) dated to AD 320–370 (fig. 10.1).

There are a few sherds of Lower Nene Valley colour-coated ware (LNV CC, Tomber and Dore 1998); two body sherds of an indented beaker dating to the mid-second to third century date (fig. 10.5). The Lower Nene Valley colour-coated ware industry originally started in East Anglia (specifically Durobrivae) in the mid-first century AD and from the mid-second century onwards, a huge range of beakers and cups were produced here, largely based on examples from the Rhineland (de la Bédoyère 2004, 32). The Lower Nene Valley pottery was widely distributed across the UK during the 2nd to 4th centuries (Potsherd Atlas online 2015). There are several sherds of grey Crambeck ware dating to the fourth century including a bowl of Crambeck Type 1b from ditch 315C, which is a typical late fourth century type (fig. 10.6).

### *Fineware*

Sixteen sherds of early Roman Samian ware, weighing 177g, were recovered from ten contexts during the archaeological investigations. The vast majority of the Samian ware (75%) was recovered from Areas A and B, while only four sherds were recovered from Area C. All of the Samian ware sherds are in poor condition and display evidence of abrasion and post-depositional damage (because of this none of the fineware sherds have been illustrated).

Over 50% of the assemblage consists of undecorated rim fragments and decorated body sherds whilst 42.8% of the assemblage consists of plain body sherds. The vast majority of the assemblage appears to originate from Central Gaul with one sherd possibly originating from Eastern Gaul. The undecorated rim fragments likely originate from dishes or shallow bowls, possibly similar to vessels illustrated in Webster (1996, 23: figure 12). Decoration on one body sherd from deposit 519C closely resembles Form 37c decoration dated to the Hadrianic to early Antonine period (Lezoux) (Webster 1996, 83: figure 59). Two further fragments consist of base sherds, possibly from an 18/31R form of shallow dish (*ibid.*, 23: figure 12).

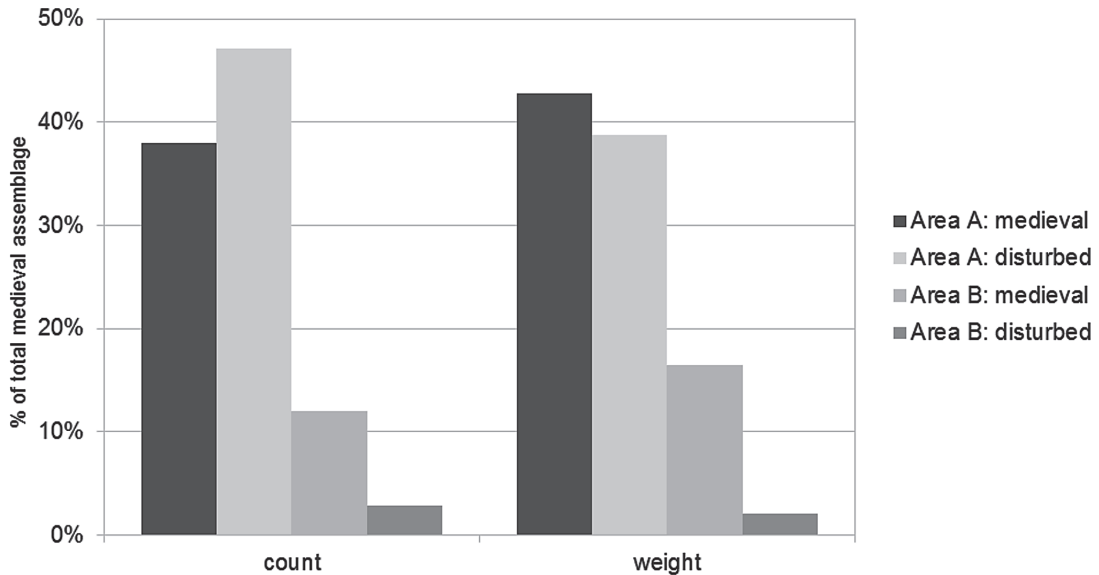
It is likely that the small fineware assemblage is residual in nature, as the vast majority of the pottery recovered from the archaeological investigations is of late second- to late fourth-century date. These sherds do provide evidence, albeit small, of domestic activity in the vicinity of the site.

### *Discussion*

This small assemblage represents the remains of mid-second- to fourth-century activity occurring within this area of Newcastle. The presence of many of the types of pottery associated with the military occupation of the area (such as the presence of Black Burnished Wares) is likely to have occurred due to the close proximity to the *Pons Aelius* fort. Most of the early Roman Samian ware was residual in nature with the exception of sherds recovered from occupation layer 519C/538C. This would indicate that there was some early Roman domestic activity at the site, albeit activity that was short lived, or of low-intensity.



Chart 1



## MEDIEVAL CERAMICS

Jenny Vaughan

### Introduction

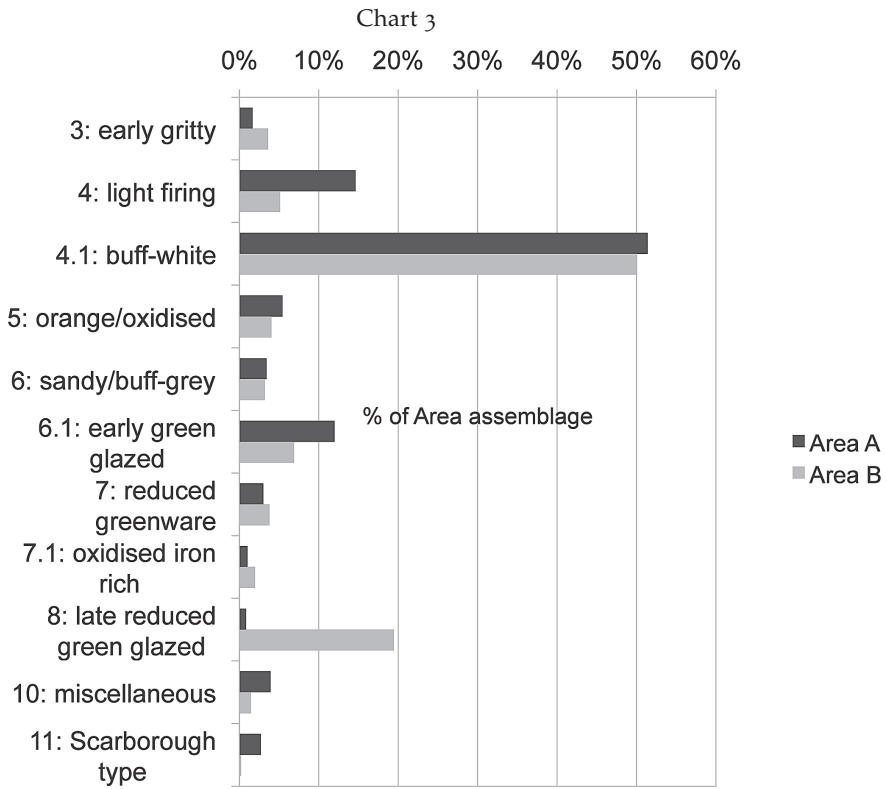
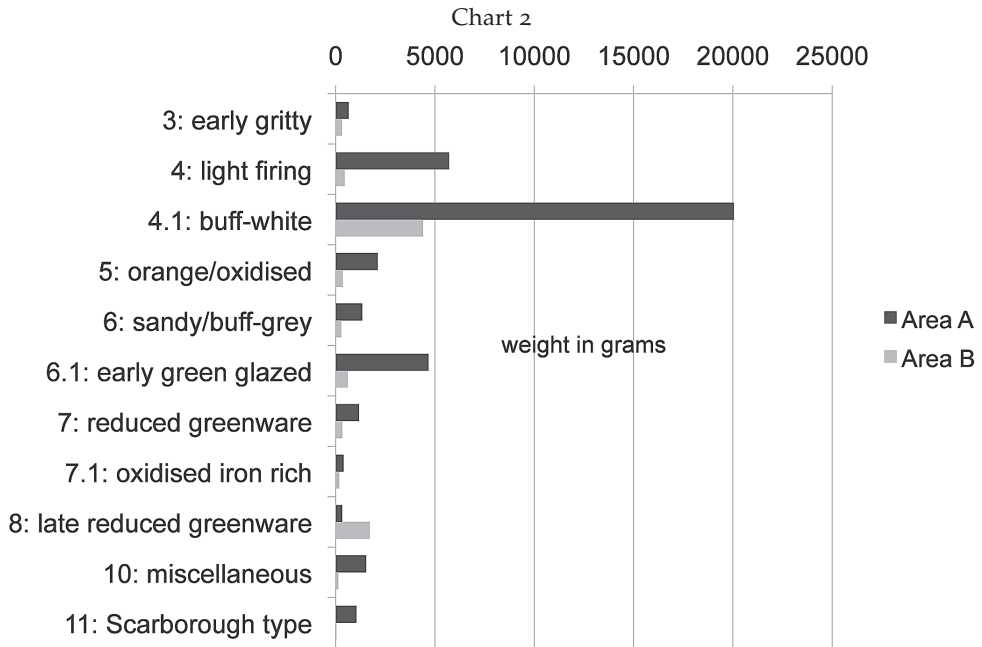
A large assemblage of over 3000 sherds of post-Roman pottery weighing just over 56kgs was recovered from the excavations. This report focuses on the medieval component from Areas A and B which was about 76% by count and 85% by weight of the total. Just over 50% by sherd count, though less by weight, of this group was actually recovered from disturbed contexts which also produced post-medieval pottery, though in a number of cases this was only one or two small fragments which might be regarded as 'intrusive'. The bulk of the assemblage came from Area A. Chart 1 summarises this data.

### The Pottery Types

The medieval assemblage is summarised in the following two charts. Chart 2 shows actual quantities (weight) while Chart 3 shows the percentage of each fabric type within each area assemblage. Chart 3 illustrates the principal difference between the two areas (other than overall quantity) which is the much greater proportion of late reduced greenware in Area B.

### Early Gritty Wares (FG2 and 3)

The 'gritty' category in the chart includes a few sherds of coarse gritted Dog Bank type ware (FG 2) of twelfth-century date (Bown and O'Brien 1988). Some of the other sherds in this group may also be twelfth century; others are *coarser* varieties of types in FGs 4, 5 and 6 and are broadly thirteenth century. There were a few jar rims and one glazed strap handle, probably from a jug. None are illustrated.



*Light-Firing Wares (FGs 4, 4.1)*

Light firing wares dominated the assemblage with Tyneside buff-white ware (BW) being the largest component within the wider group (Vessel Nos. 28, 206, 315 and 603, figs. 11.1–11.4). The full range of BW colour and fabric variations was present, from very pale to harder fired mid/dark grey with buff external margin, and included a small proportion of the more iron-rich variety 'orange buff-white'. Inclusions are, characteristically, very varied and ill-sorted and included sherds with frequent black ferrous grits. Other light-firing wares are generally sandier than BW but, as most of the vessels present are jars, this may be because more temper was added to the clay when this vessel type was being made (Vessel Nos. 100, 111, 114, 368, 480, 483, 502, 524 and 569, figs. 12.1–12.9).

*'Orange' Wares (FG 5)*

This group, which remains one of the less well defined regional fabric groups, covers a range of iron-rich generally sandy/quartz gritted wares which elsewhere are known to occur in twelfth–thirteenth century, and later contexts (Vaughan and Sage 2006). Rims present here indicated both jugs and jars.

*Grey Cored Sandy Wares (FG 6 = unglazed, 6.1 = glazed)*

These occurred in much smaller quantities than FG 4 (Vessel 120, fig. 13.1). Early glazed wares, formerly designated 'reduced greenware types 1–3' (see Vaughan and Sage 2006 and Ellison 1981) made up over 75% of this group. These are grey-firing, green-glazed, quartz-gritted wares, and here the very dark types 1 and 2 were most numerous. Most of the sherds were probably from jugs although precise forms could not generally be identified from the vessel families present. As for the light-firing wares, rod handles out-numbered strap handles. There were also two possible curfew rims. One part-oxidised splash-glazed jug had rouletted bands. One or two other sherds had impressed decoration. The unglazed sherds in this fabric group, usually with buff or pink margins/surfaces, included a few jar rims.

*Reduced/oxidised iron rich wares (FG 7 and 7.1)*

This group covers reduced green-glazed wares which may not be as fine or well glazed as the later reduced greenwares of FG 8. Generally these are iron-rich wares and the group includes unglazed/partly glazed and oxidised/part oxidised fabrics (FG 7.1) with the same characteristics. Vessels included jars in the oxidised/part oxidised fabric and two possible urinal rims. There were also one or two jug rims and the handle from a possible 'drinking jug'.

*Later reduced wares (FG 8)*

The quantity of later reduced greenware from Area A was very small. Half the sherds (a greater proportion by weight) came from just three contexts in Area B. These included a large base with the shadow of the rim it had rested on in the kiln and the rim, handle and base of one or two large vessels (jug or cistern).

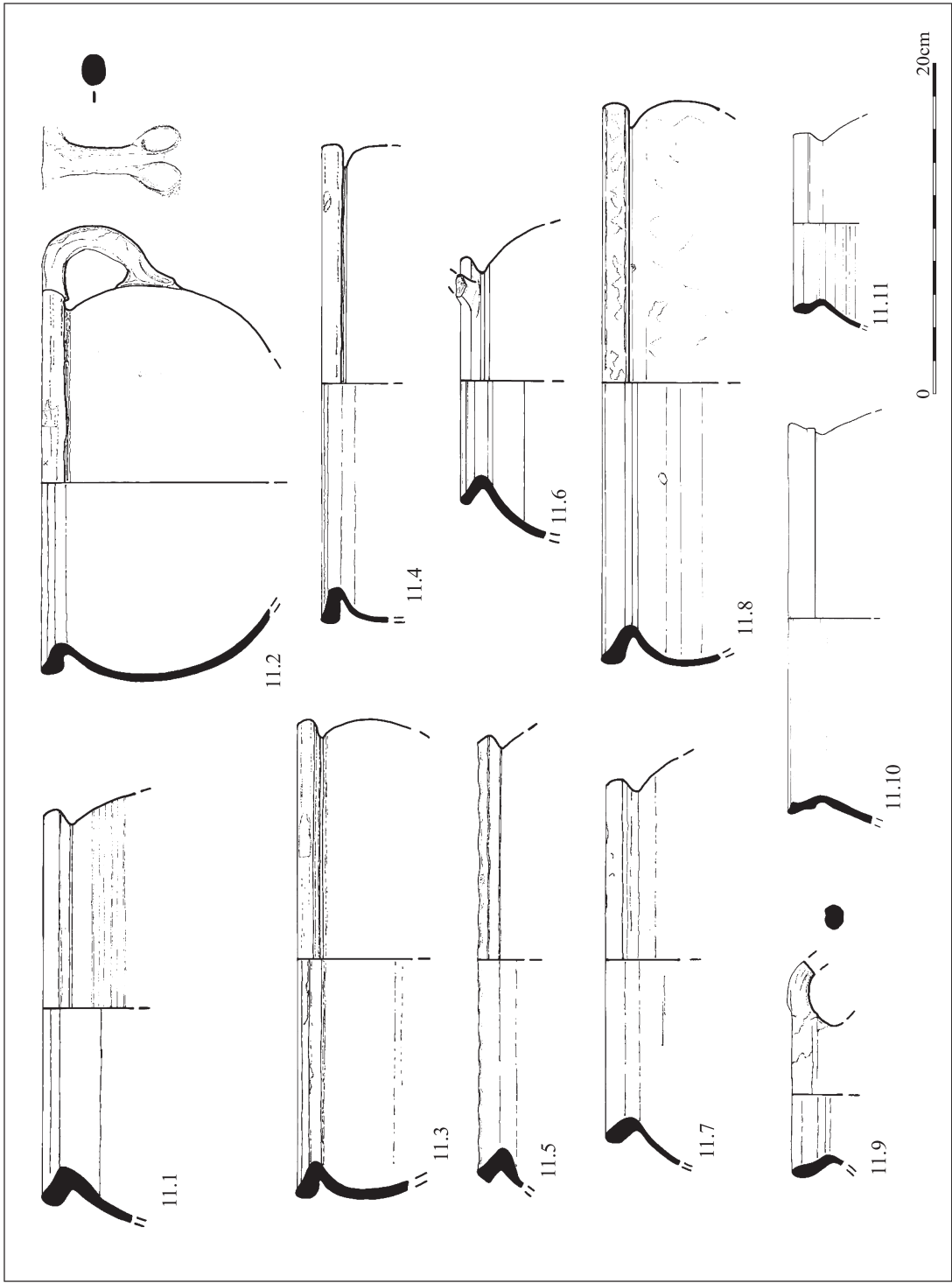


Fig. 11 Medieval buff white ware jars. 11.1 Vessel 100, 11.2 Vessel 111, 11.3 Vessel 114, 11.4 Vessel 226 11.5 Vessel 368, 11.6 Vessel 480, 11.7 Vessel 482, 11.8 Vessel 483, 11.9 Vessel 484, 11.10 Vessel 502, 11.11 Vessel 524.

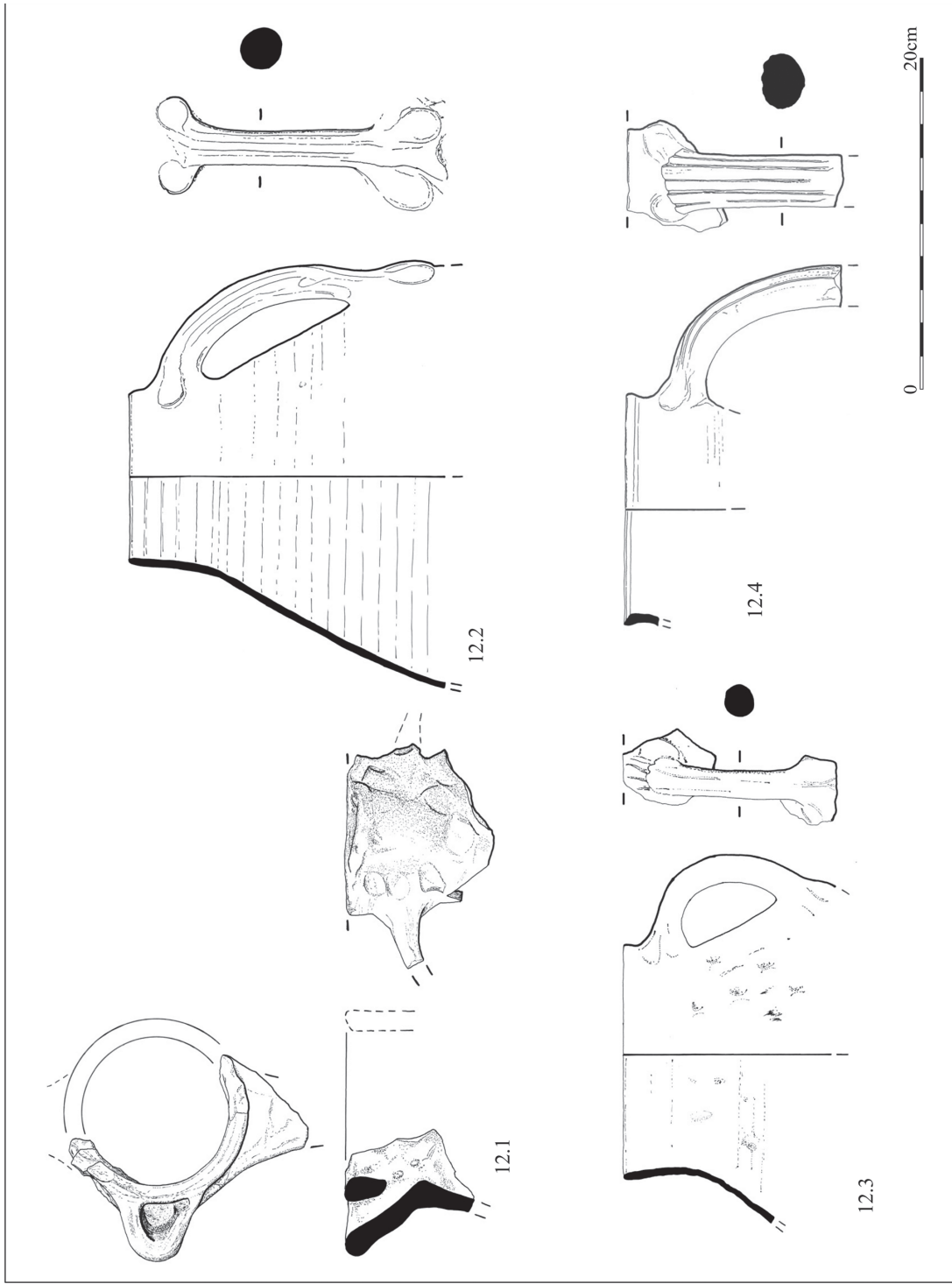


Fig. 12 Medieval buff white ware jugs (1). 12.1 Vessel 28, 12.2 Vessel 206, 12.3 Vessel 208, 12.4 Vessel 313.

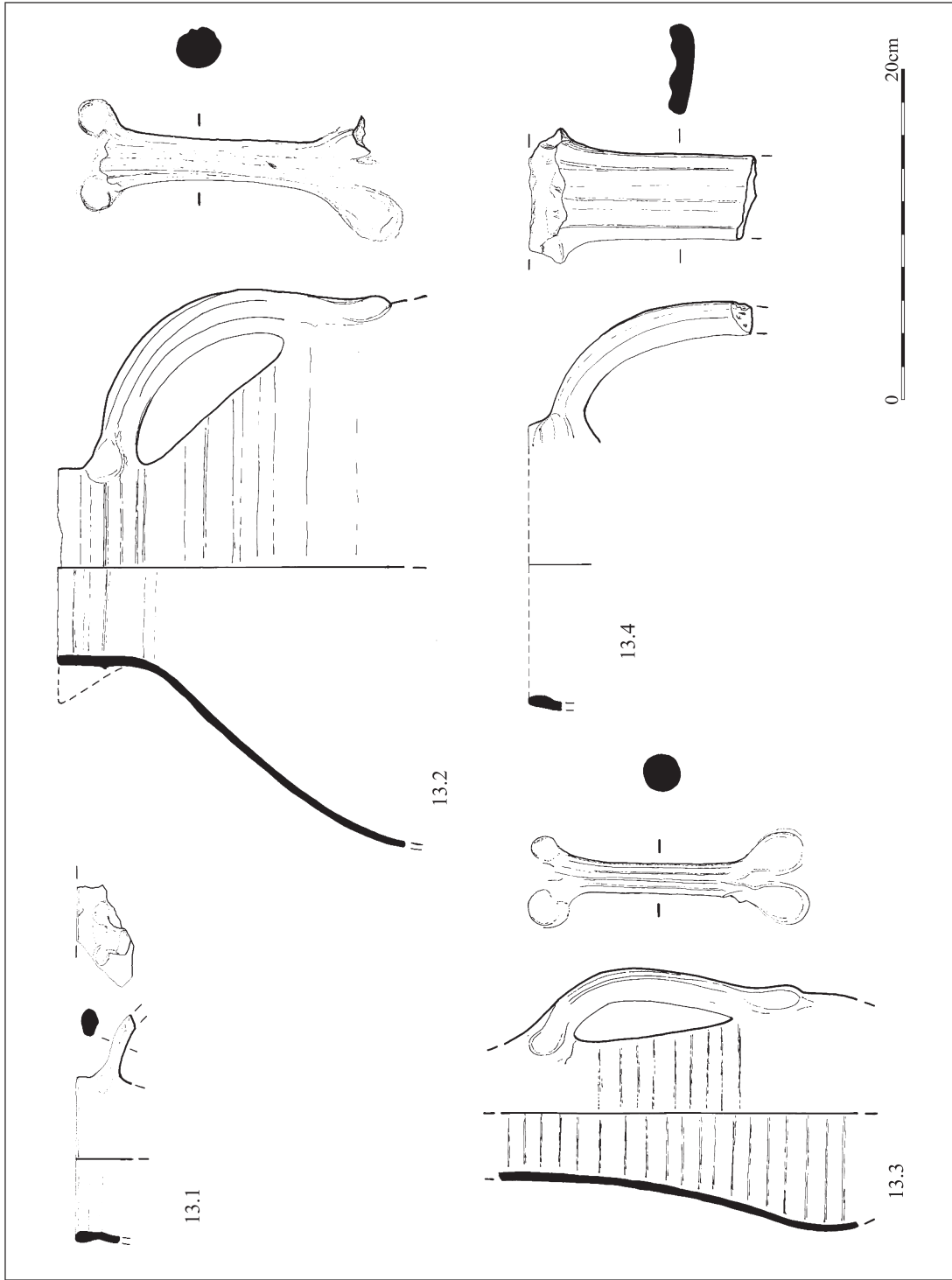


Fig. 13 Medieval buff white ware jugs (2). 13.1 Vessel 315, 13.2 Vessel 568, 13.3 vessel 569, 13.4 Vessel 603.

*Miscellaneous (FG 10)*

This covers small, burnt, abraded or otherwise unidentified/unidentifiable medieval material.

*Scarborough ware (FG 11)*

There were two possible sherds from Area B but the rest of this small group (43 sherds) came from Area A. Scarborough ware is usually only present in small quantities other than on sites down near the Quayside. However, at least eleven vessels are represented: there were four handles, three 'dummy' handles (or parts of bearded masks), and a bridge spout.

*Imports not included in the chart (FGs 12, 14 and 16)*

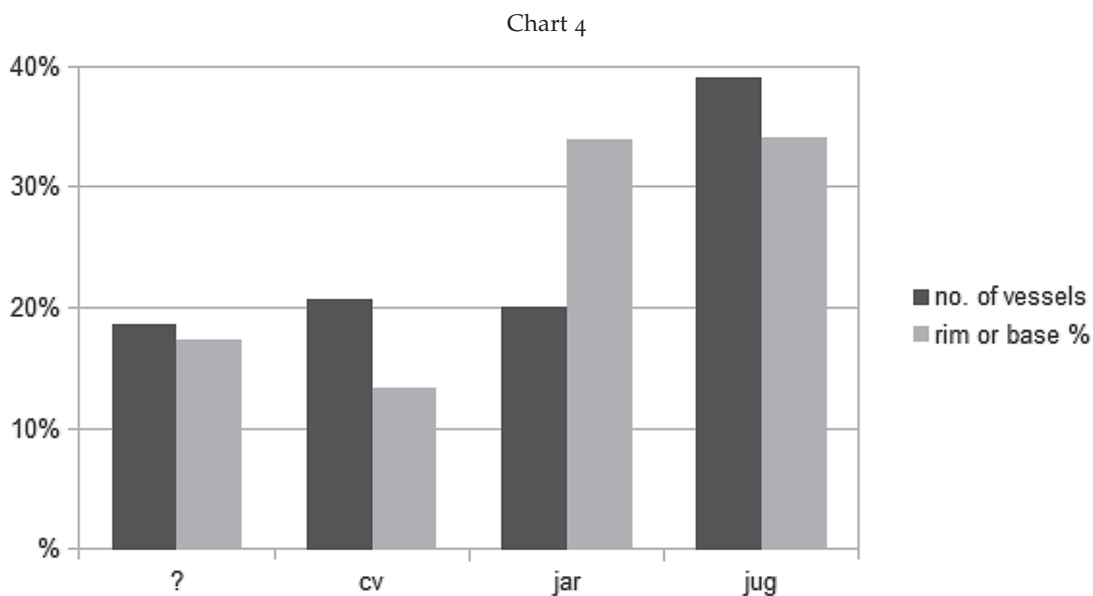
There were two fragments of French, probably Saintonge, whiteware (FG 12). One was tiny with mottled green glaze. The other appeared to be part of a parrot-beak spout with plain green glaze. Other continental imports were five small fragments of German stoneware. These could be late medieval, i.e. fifteenth / sixteenth century, and thus contemporary with later reduced wares. They were found in the same contexts as these later wares in Area B.

*Discussion*

A total of 343 vessels were identified by single form elements, or sherd 'families'. The majority of these came from Area A. Disappointingly, although the assemblage was less fragmented than is often the case, it did not prove possible to find many sherd links beyond those already identified during the assessment phase. It was not possible to reconstruct any complete profiles. A large proportion (about a third) of the vessels were represented only by base fragments most of which could not, with certainty, be identified with a specific vessel form (see below).

Of the Area A vessels, one was probably a small drinking jug, one a possible urinal and two were open vessels, possibly curfews (another possible curfew came from Area B). The rest of the Area A vessels are illustrated in Chart 4. The '?' and 'cv' ('cooking vessels') categories are the unidentified vessels mainly represented by bases, the latter being sooted. Jugs are often found sooted, and not all jars are used on a fire or, if they are, are not necessarily sooted all over, so these fragments could belong to either form. Indeed some could be 'open' vessels, such as bowls, although these are rare in medieval assemblages in this region. The likelihood is that the majority of the un-sooted bases are in fact jugs and the majority of the sooted ones are jars.

In Chart 4, as well as a column for the number of vessels represented, there is one for the total of the percentages of rim or base present (sometimes referred to as EVES or estimated vessel equivalents). This gives a broad indication of completeness of vessels but, like most measures of quantification, can be misleading. The chart suggests that jugs were far more fragmentary than jars. Jars were on average twice as complete as the jugs (14% as opposed to 7%). However, over a third of the jugs were represented just by handles, and although it is theoretically possible to have handle EVES (Orton, Tyers and Vince 1993, 172), this was not attempted here so these vessels are invisible in the percentage statistics. The illustrated vessels 206 and 569 demonstrate how misleading this can be (figs 12.2 and 13.3).



Whatever the drawbacks of the various quantification methods, overall it appears that jugs outnumber jars by a factor of 2:1 on a simple vessel count of the clearly identified vessels. If adjustments are made for the likely jugs and jars amongst the unidentified ('?' and 'cv') vessels, jugs are still in the majority though by a lesser margin of about 3:2.

At the Castle, analysis of the vessel forms (Vaughan and Sage 2006) showed jars as the dominant form in the mid/late twelfth century (8:1) with this ratio diminishing until it is about 5:4 by the middle of the thirteenth century. Jugs become dominant at approximately 3:2 in the mid to late thirteenth century. By the early fourteenth century the proportion is 5:1. In terms of the overall proportions of fabric types, the pattern in Area A at the Parcels Office site with the dominance of buff-white wares, most resembles this phase at the Castle but the jug:jar ratio is very different.

Of the jar rims that could be measured (48) over half (26) were between 18 and 24 cm and only six were larger, the largest was 30 cm. The rest were between 10 and 16 cm. The equivalent phase at the Castle only produced 17 measurable rims so any comparison has limited value. Sizes there ranged from 8 to 38 cm. Jug rims were recorded but not studied. They tend to vary far less than jars, almost all being between 10 and 12 cm, and are not a good guide to the size/capacity of the vessel.

In the pottery assemblage from Gallowgate (a site outside Newcastle town walls) studied by the present writer, jars were slightly more numerous than jugs in all phases, including the latest which extended well into the fourteenth century. There were very few jars with rims larger than 22 cm. In the phase most comparable with the Parcels Office assemblage there were 24 measurable rims with a concentration between 17 cm and 20 cm. The others ranged from 12 cm to 26 cm. In the latest Gallowgate phase a substantial proportion of jars were also smaller than 17 cm. It was noted that a significant proportion of the jars were made in oxidised iron-rich fabrics.



In the assemblage from the INTO (Newcastle University) site, also studied by the current writer (Vaughan 2013), in the two phases most comparable to this site the proportion of jars to jugs was even, and overall jugs only outnumbered jars by a factor of about 4:3, although, like the Gallowgate site, the later phases had a substantial later fourteenth-century component. Of 43 measurable jar rims 25 were between 18cm and 22cm with only seven larger (up to 28cm). There was also a significant group of iron-rich wares similar to that seen at Gallowgate.

In addition to the similarities seen in the pottery assemblages, both the sites discussed above are suburban, i.e. outside the town walls, and both had indications of industrial activity. This suggests that the patterns seen are closely related to the occupations of the consumers and the nature of the activities taking place on the site.

Returning to the former Parcels Office site, there was a group of jars in the iron-rich FG 5 and two in FG 7.1 but the majority were in light-firing (iron poor) fabrics, although a group of these were oxidised 'pink' wares. However, in terms of vessels types the assemblage from Area A perhaps has more in common with the suburban groups than with that recovered from the Castle.



Fig. 14 Pit 478C after excavation (note the remains of wooden lining within the base of the feature).

The Area B assemblage was far smaller than that from Area A (see above and charts). Any statistics relating to the group should therefore be regarded with more caution. There also appears to be a greater element of residuality in this area as although buff-white ware is the dominant fabric (in the same proportion as it was in Area A), there is also a significant quantity of late medieval reduced wares present. In fact, only a third of the sherds came from contexts which did not either produce late medieval material or have indications of post-medieval disturbance. There were smaller proportions (relative to Area A) of other light firing wares and early green-glazed wares. Without the presence of the later reduced greenware, the pattern would suggest a slightly later date range extending well into the first half of the fourteenth century.

Only 59 vessels were identified in Area B. Jugs out-numbered jars by over 2:1 but of the 27 jugs identified, seven were later reduced wares. If these are excluded, and similar adjustments to those referred to above are made for the unidentified forms, the proportions are about even. Because of the relatively small size of this sample, and the problem of residuality, the statistics are not presented in chart form. However, they do seem to confirm the Area A evidence of the continuing importance of jars to the consumers on this site compared to those disposing of their pottery within the Castle.



Fig. 15 View of Area A showing former alignment of Westgate Road (cobbled area) in relation to the present alignment.

The bulk of the medieval material which came from Area A was probably deposited in the mid/late thirteenth to early fourteenth centuries. Dog Bank ware and other possible twelfth- / early thirteenth-century sherds occurred in very small quantities and residually, i.e. mixed with later material. There is clearly later medieval activity in Area B but only a small quantity of pottery appears to have actually been discarded at that time. The rest of the small Area B assemblage being broadly similar to, though possibly slightly later than Area A. Overall, the assemblage was of good size and less fragmented than is often the case so provided an opportunity for studying its composition, specifically with regard to the proportions of different vessel types present. This has revealed some interesting similarities, as well as some differences, with other Tyneside assemblages of comparable date range.

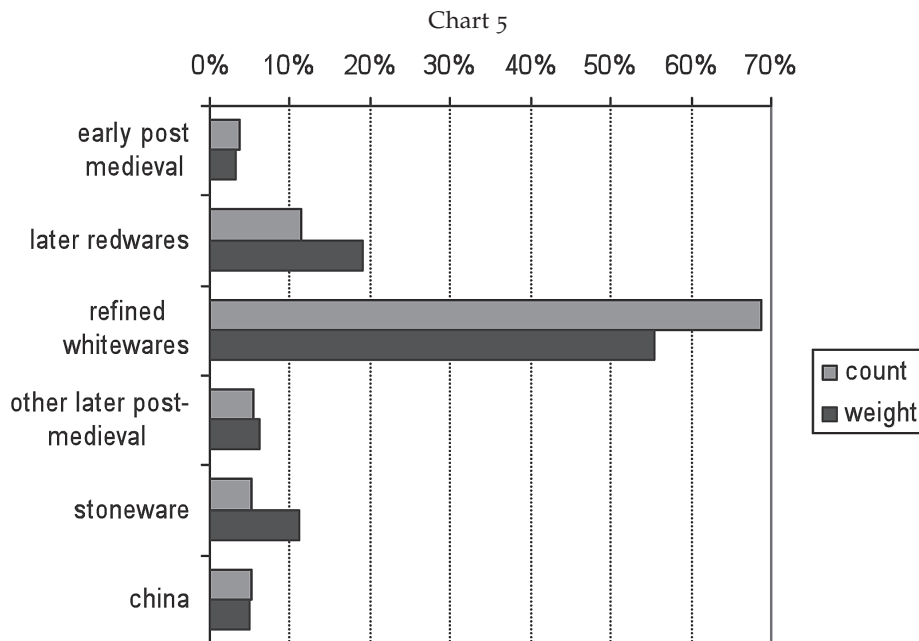
It is to be hoped that similar studies on other sites will be possible in the future to enable a better understanding of what causes these differences in patterns of consumption.

#### POST-MEDIEVAL CERAMICS

*Jenny Vaughan and Megan Stoakley*

A total of 615 sherds of post-medieval ceramics, weighing 8763 g, were recovered during archaeological investigations at the site. The vast majority of the pottery ( $n = 566$ , 92%) was recovered from Areas A and B whilst the remaining 8% was recovered from Area C. This article focusses largely on the post-medieval pottery from Areas A and B.

The majority of the post-medieval material appears to be of nineteenth-century date (Chart 5). There was a small quantity of possibly seventeenth-century redware, two small fragments of Staffordshire-type slipware and one of tin-glazed earthenware, which could also be seventeenth, or early eighteenth century, and a small base of white salt glazed stoneware probably eighteenth century. These are grouped together in Chart 5.



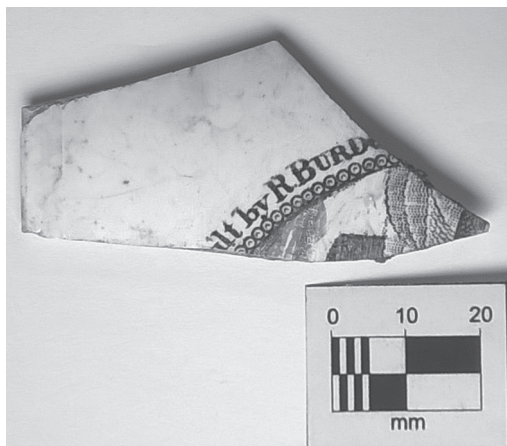


Fig. 16 (above) Wear bridge sherd.

Fig. 17 (right) NC Orphan Institution stamp.



Refined whitewares (mainly tablewares) dominated this assemblage by both count and weight. Nearly 70% of the sherds were decorated (some 'plain' ones may well also be from decorated vessels) and, as is usually the case, transfer printed fragments were most numerous amongst the decorated wares. The majority of these were blue printed but there were small quantities of various other colours. Sponge decorated wares, also predominantly blue, were the next most common type. Other fragments had simple painted or slip lines and there was a single sherd with 'worm' decoration. Five fragments were biscuit fired, two of them with transfer printing.

There were a few fragments of some intrinsic interest. One, although very small, is identifiable as a Sunderland product (possibly a mug) printed with a representation of the Wear Bridge — only a small bit of the right hand side of the picture is present. It has the partial legend '...ilt by R.BURD...', i.e. *built by R. Burdon* (fig. 16). This bridge was opened in 1796 and closed in 1858 for safety reasons.

Another piece, a large mug profile, has a symbol of a belt in a circle with the words 'Orphan Institution' round it; in the middle is an interlocked C and N. Part of a similar 'belt' emblem, but no words are visible on another sherd (fig. 17). It is likely that the N and C emblem stands for Northern Counties Orphan Institution which was based in Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne. It was established in March 1864 at the request of Reverend J. Lintott (CCH online 2015).

The later redwares only made up 11% by count but were the next largest group. The proportion by weight was greater (19%), which is usually the case as red earthenware is increasingly, after the seventeenth century, used for large utilitarian kitchen and storage vessels which are less fragile than the whitewares used on the table. The majority of the redwares here had an internal white slip, a few mottled with brown, and are fragments of bowls or dishes. Some of the plain brown glazed sherds may be from eighteenth-century vessels.

There was a variety of stoneware fragments. Many were quite small and it was not possible to identify vessels or date them with any degree of confidence. Some eighteenth-century material may be present including a small handle fragment. The only other form sherd, and the largest fragment present, was the base of a jar with the stamped mark of Price, Bristol. Price was a large manufacturer of stoneware in Bristol throughout the nineteenth century. The 'miscellaneous' category included a few brown glazed sherds (probably tea pot fragments) and yellow glazed sherds with some slip bands but nothing of particular interest. Amongst the china was a very small jar which may be from a doll's service. Other vessels included small bowls and dishes, some with gold lines or traces of lustre decoration.

#### CLAY TOBACCO PIPE

*Jenny Vaughan and Megan Stoakley*

##### *Introduction*

A total of 204 clay tobacco pipe fragments, weighing 519 g, were available for analysis. A total of 199 fragments were recovered from Areas A and B and the report focusses on this assemblage. The fragments are in good condition and display only a small level of post-depositional damage. Roughly 80% of the assemblage consisted of plain stem fragments and most of these had stem bores indicating a later eighteenth- to late nineteenth-century date. Most of the marked items, and the associated pottery, were of broadly mid to late nineteenth-century date (possibly into the twentieth century) although four pipe fragments came from three contexts which otherwise appeared to be medieval and can be assumed to be contaminants. A small quantity of earlier material was present.

##### *Range and Variety*

A stem with the mark of Thomas Parke (1667–87) came from context 132C together with several stem fragments with large bores indicating a similar date. Four other contexts produced large bored stems. Thomas Parke originally started his working life in Gateshead as a 'Journeyman Feltmaker' before becoming a pipe maker in the mid to late seventeenth century (Edwards 1986, 31).

All other decorated or marked items were 19th century. These included three RAOB pipe bowls (c. 1850–1930). The abbreviation RAOB stands for the 'Royal Antediluvian Order of the Buffalo' (Solt Dennis 2005, 30). The order was established in 1822. One pipe bowl complete with a length of stem has part of the mark of William Tennant of Newcastle (1871–1925). A small piece of stem had part of a mark also identifiable as William Tennant. The Tennants were well-known pipemakers in Tyneside during the 19th century (Edwards 1986, 2).

Two other partial marks were of the Gateshead maker Adams (1887–1894), one of these was evidently a Burns Cutty (pipe with a short stem) as the letters BURN were visible. These types of pipes were particularly favoured by the working population. The only complete

mark was of another Gateshead maker, Thomas Hardy (1850–1858). A small piece of bowl had the stamped letters ‘...MBIER’. This is identifiable as the Parisian pipemaker Gambier. Gambier of Paris was one of the major pipemakers in France in the mid-19th century (Trinkley and Adams 1993, 304).

Two stems with moulded decoration had an unfamiliar maker’s name/place. The letters were eventually deciphered as BELL and BEDFORD after noting that Jarrett, in his second article on makers recorded in the area, lists an S.BELL/BEDFORD found at Walbottle (Jarrett 1964 p. 259 no.34).

Apart from the RAOB example mentioned above there were only two other complete bowls. One was a small spurless bowl with a shamrock moulded across the base and the other, also small, a spurred ribbed bowl. Eight other fragmentary decorated bowls (some were very small pieces) had various symbols and decoration including ribs, anchors, a ship and Prince of Wales feathers. Heraldic pipes bearing the royal arms, City Arms and the Prince of Wales feathers started being produced in London during the first half of the 18th century (Ayto 1994, 6). Armorial pipes are not as common in the north and midlands in comparison to the south, as their distribution was largely concentrated around London and the surrounding southern counties (Atkinson and Oswald 1980, 390).

The inclusion of armorial clay tobacco pipes in this assemblage may provide evidence of trade networks with the southern counties, although local pipemakers in Gateshead and Newcastle may have started producing these pipes in line with contemporary fashion. The majority of other pipes were locally produced.

## ENVIRONMENTAL REMAINS AND METALLURGICAL RESIDUES

*Don P. O’Meara*

### INTRODUCTION

During the course of the archaeological excavations 102 soil samples were collected, as well as hand collected animal bone. This material contains a mixture of *in-situ* primary archaeological material (largely relating to the deposits within the wood-lined pits) and material which might be broadly described as surface, levelling, or backfill deposits. Despite significant later disturbance these isolated areas of *in-situ* material contain preserved medieval material relating to the local diet and environment of this area of medieval Newcastle. In particular, the evidence relates to the thirteenth–fourteenth century in the case of the preserved pits. The anoxic preservation of some of these remains is of particular interest because of the comparative rarity of remains of this nature in Newcastle. Topographically, the city is built on an area of raised ground which was added to significantly by medieval land reclamation and quay construction (e.g. as discussed by O’Brien *et al.* 1988). Therefore, archaeological deposits above the Quayside are generally not of the deep, anoxic type, which are typical of low-lying urban sites such as York or London (Graves and Heslop 2013, 202).

Though the remains are broadly comparable with other sites from Newcastle, the disturbance of the area means establishing stratigraphic and temporal relationships between all the samples proved difficult. This is the main drawback to examining material from heavily truncated sites. The material was approached by trying to characterise the deposits as those representing *in-situ* primary deposits and those which represent possible mixed, levelling or backfill material.

### *Plant Remains*

The archaeobotanical material is comparable with other Newcastle sites, such as the excavations at Queen Street and Dog Bank (O'Brien *et al.* 1988), where the remains of charred food plants were interpreted as representing 'a very low "background" assemblage, probably originating in domestic ash, which was the principle component in many of the non-waterlogged deposits' (Nicholson and Hall 1988, 113). In general, evidence of faecal derived plant remains is sparse. At the Mansion House site, 'Seeds from waterlogged exotic taxa occur scattered throughout but are never abundant and are therefore unlikely to reflect faecal material' (Huntley 1995, 198). Much the same can be said of the excavations at Close Gate (Fraser *et al.* 1994), and Newgate Street (Roberts 2006), where the assemblage contained sparse charred remains and other remains dominated by 'woody' decay resistant seeds. For the surface layers and demolition deposits from Westgate Road this observation is also applicable, with 42 of the sampled contexts falling into this category. In general, these deposits proved to be relatively barren of archaeobotanical material, except for several backfill and demolition layers. The frequent finds of fig seeds and fragments of corn-cockle suggest at least some deposits containing human faecal matter was redeposited within these layers, while the 'ashy' nature of the heavy residues are analogous with other sites in Newcastle. The material from the possible tanning pits can be compared with finds from High Bridge. There, two latrine fills contained sloes and brambleberries, though notably no imported exotic fruits (O'Brien 2010, 369).

Chronologically, the richest samples fall within the medieval period, and generally within the thirteenth–fourteenth centuries. Though the medieval dates are based on the evidence from recovered pottery rather than any scientific dating of these features, it suggests that the excavations uncovered short, possibly even a single, phase of tanning activity, proceeded by a period of disuse when the pits became a receptacle for human faecal matter and ending with a period of ground levelling which preserved the pit fills. This inconsistent deposition of archaeological material, where some periods demonstrate more extensive preservation than others, is a feature of many Northern European cities, characterised by changing urban activities and urban waste disposal practices (Schofield and Vince 2003, 18).

A notable site characteristic was the frequency with which fig seeds were present on the site with 30 of the samples producing such remains. These included low numbers of seeds in many of these samples, but also large concentrations of many hundreds of seeds in pits 466C and 414C. Significantly, these samples also contained abundant remains of brambleberry seeds, as well as grape seeds in the case of 466C. These would both strongly suggest the use of these pits as cesspits in their later use, as well as suggesting that these remains post-date the thirteenth century when fig and grape remains begin to become more popular in Northern England. A similar suite of remains were retrieved from ditch 461C, suggesting that this feature received some human faecal waste. Material from Pit 478C produced fig remains and a fragment of walnut shell (*Juglans regia*), as well as finds of brambleberry seeds, sloe stones (*Prunus spinosa*) and fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*) suggesting that this feature was also used as a cesspit.

The cereal remains from Westgate Road were noticeably sparse with only one of the samples producing more than 5 charred grains; 122 charred grains retrieved from Pit 392C. The low numbers of other plant remains from this pit suggests that this context may have held material solely from a single activity such as corn-drying. The grains were roughly

evenly divided between charred domestic oats (65 grains, identified by the presence of floret bases) and hulled two-row barley (55 grains), while only two wheat type grains were recovered. With the exception of this one feature, the sparse remains of cereal grains from this site is likely to be largely due to taphonomic factors where cereal are processed elsewhere in the city and then distributed as flour rather than unprocessed grains (Moffett 2006, 41–43). The presence of corn-cockle seeds coats (*Agrostemma githago*) is indirect evidence of flour consumption, as these seeds are likely to have been present within the flour as a crop contaminant; suggested by the crushed nature of all of these remains, rather than whole seeds. Remains of corn-cockle were recovered from pit 478C in abundant numbers, as well as cereal bran, though such remains were absent from pits 466C and 414C. Seeds of henbane (*Hyoscyamus niger*) were recovered infrequently.

Apart from the remains of plants eaten by the local population there were also a number of plants which may reflect the local environment. Finds of elder berries (*Sambucus nigra*), stinging nettles (*Urtica dioica*), goosefoots (*Chenopodiaceae*) and sedges (*Carex* species) all suggest environments where weeds of damp, nutrient rich environments could thrive. Finds of weld (*Reseda luteola*) and wild mignonette (*Reseda lutea*) both suggest disturbed areas, which fits in well with the model of the area being regularly levelled and built up during the medieval period. Such remains have been suggested as evidence of a dyeing industry in the city (Huntley 1994, 137), though it is suggested here that the material is derived from wild plants within the urban environment. These plants have been observed by the author growing extensively in waste ground along the Tyne, in particular around Tyne Dock. A nutrient rich environment is likely to have been present in the backyard plots where either tanning or dumping of faecal material was carried out. In comparison to the finds from the cesspit deposits, the material from the occupation layers were much sparser with few remains of plants being recovered.

### *Animal Bones*

The animal bone remains from the site were relatively few, with 185 identified mammal and bird bones being recovered by hand collection from the site. The preservation of this material was moderately good with most surfaces clear, though bones from the pits often had grit and faecal concretions adhering to the surface; a feature often seen in remains from cesspits. One possible significant pattern was the relatively common occurrence of cattle horn-cores. Over 10% of the identified bone consisted of this element. Some of these remains, such as those from Pit 466C, derived from features which have been identified as having an association with tanning activities. A find of a goat horn-core suggests that possible tawing activity was also taking place at the site. Although the numbers of remains present are much lower than seen in other tanning assemblages (Albarella 2003), in the context of the archaeological information the evidence from the zooarchaeological assemblage suggests that some of the features identified during the investigation were indeed at one stage tanning pits. After tanning activity ceased at the site these pits then had a final phase of activity as features where human faecal material was dumped.

### *Archaeometallurgical Residues*

All of the heavy residues were sampled for archaeometallurgical material by scanning the dried residue with a hand-magnet. In total 81 of the samples produced at least some hammer



scale, indicative of local iron-smithing. The volumes recovered were quite variable however, ranging from less than 1 gram, to over 40 grams. This still accounts for less than 15 grams per 10 litres for the upper end of this scale. Along with the comparatively high amounts of fuel ash found in the samples based on comparative examples it is concluded that this material was deposited by the local activities of small scale ferrous metal working (Biek and Bayley 1979, 6; Lucas and Paynter 2010, 3).

## DISCUSSION

The investigations undertaken at the former Parcels Office revealed archaeological remains dating to three broad periods; Roman, medieval and post-medieval. The low incidence of Roman period features and finds suggests that the site witnessed only minimal activity during this time. This is especially apparent when the Roman remains identified at the Parcels Office site are compared to those revealed during an evaluation undertaken at 1–8 Westgate Road, located approximately 45 m further east. Although this evaluation only consisted of the excavation of six small trenches, it did demonstrate the presence of intensive multi-phase occupation of probable second- / third-century date, which included structural remains, successive road surfaces and refuse pits, leading to the conclusion that this site lay within the Roman vicus (Goode 2007). The absence of any such remains at the former Parcels Office suggests that this area lay outside or on the very periphery of the Roman civilian settlement, with the main focus of activity occurring to the east and to the southeast (e.g. Mabbitt 2004, Claydon 2009).

Hadrian's Wall was identified a mere 28m north of the former Parcels Office during an evaluation undertaken at the former Hertz Building in 2004 (McKelvey *et al.* 2004), and it is possible that the Parcels Office site is situated in the area between the Wall and the *vallum* to its south. Of particular note here is the alignment of the Roman ditch identified during the investigations at the former Parcels Office, which was at right angles to the proposed line of Wall (*ibid.*, fig. 3). However, it is likely that the location of the Wall influenced many aspects of later Roman activity without having any direct association with it and any relationship between the two sites is purely speculative. Based upon the evidence then, it is likely that the Roman remains represent limited activity on the periphery of the civilian settlement which, based upon dating evidence, was largely contemporary with the main military use of the fort of *Pons Aelius* (Snape and Bidwell 2002).

Following the Roman period, there appears to have been a hiatus in activity at the site until the thirteenth century. Although it is possible that later activity removed any evidence of occupation during this time, the lack of identified post-Roman / early medieval deposits does correlate with the results of other nearby archaeological investigations, as at 1–8 Westgate Road (Goode 2007, 23) and the former Hertz Building (McKelvey *et al.* 2004, 13). It would appear that following the abandonment of the Roman fort, the entire area, including the civilian settlement and the former Parcels Office site, was either completely abandoned or was subjected to only very low levels of activity.

The medieval remains revealed during the investigations provided evidence for small-scale industry and the possible beginnings of a formalised infrastructure, both of which appear to have been established during the mid / late thirteenth century. The evidence for tanning on the site is particularly interesting as it provides some insight into one of the many industries which must have taken place within the walls of the medieval town and the

surrounding area. Although the tanning activity undertaken on the site appeared to be concentrated within a relatively small area, it is possible that similar practices were being undertaken in other areas close by as a number of horn cores were found to the east during the construction of the railway arches (Peters and Wooler 2006, 15).

Newcastle was known as a centre for medieval leather working and leather processing industries were well represented in the late medieval craft guilds and companies (Hodgson 1921). As an important trading town Newcastle's trade was supported by a full range of guilds, which in the case of leather working included butchers, skinnners, tanners, cordwainers, and saddlers (Graves and Heslop 2013, 114–119), though as formalised structures these would not have been established until the fifteenth century. By the earlier post-medieval period, over 10% of Newcastle's tradesmen were involved in the leather industry (Thomson 1981). Importantly, the Parcels Office site also provides evidence for the physical location of leather working activity within the city walls, as opposed to deposits containing redeposited material as found at the quayside land reclamation. Direct evidence of this nature has been lacking from central Newcastle, a pattern that may be linked to urban waste management systems within the medieval city (Graves and Heslop 2013, 205). The presence of such a relatively unpleasant activity within the intra-mural area also suggests that plenty of unoccupied space was present within the city walls during the thirteenth century. The small-scale tanning industry appears to have been short lived however, and it seems that by the fourteenth century, the tanning pits had been backfilled. This might be linked to a general pattern of the decline in the hide export trade in customs rolls, though other historic evidence highlights the importance of the domestic market for animal hide and pelt products (Graves and Heslop 205–206).

Following the cessation of tanning practices on the site, some of the extant pits appear to have been re-used as cesspits. The material recovered from these cesspits has revealed evidence for medieval consumption patterns. Whilst similar food plants have been recovered during recent excavations at Close Gate (Fraser *et al.* 1994), the Mansion House site (Fraser *et al.* 1995) and Queen Street and Dog Bank (O'Brien *et al.* 1988), these remains were in relatively low frequencies and were not recovered from primary deposits unlike those recovered from the former Parcels Office site.

It is probable that the post-medieval layout of this part of Newcastle was established during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, evidenced by the remains of the rudimentary road surface below and on the same alignment as the later Westgate Street, and by the remains of a potential timber structure and boundary ditches on the same alignment as later post-medieval buildings. Although the observed features were set back from the road, they are likely to have been situated to the rear of a more substantial building fronting the road. Similar evidence was recovered from the excavation at 1–8 Westgate Road, which revealed potential floor surfaces and refuse pits, suggested as being situated within the back plots of properties fronting onto the main thoroughfare (Goode 2007). Again, during excavations at the former Hertz Building, the presence of soil accumulations and the lack of significant medieval structural evidence was taken as evidence that the excavation was partially located within the gardens/back plots of medieval burgages (McKelvey *et al.* 2004). What is clear from all of these investigations is that evidence for medieval structures directly fronting the main thoroughfare is lacking. This may be further evidence that plots and structures established during this time formed the footprint for consecutive later buildings, which ultimately removed any trace of these earlier structures.

Confirmed evidence of late medieval/early post-medieval activity at the former Parcels Office site was generally low. Whilst a possible crude road surface and stone-lined drain identified within Area A may have belonged to the early post-medieval period, this is based purely on stratigraphic grounds and both could have an earlier or later provenance. The frequency of finds dating to this period was also low, with the majority of late medieval/early post-medieval pottery types recovered from secondary contexts within Area B, which is likely to have formed the back plot of a building at the time. The limited evidence of activity during this period may not be surprising however, if the same plots of land established during the medieval period continued in use through the entire post-medieval period. If so, this would have led to a scenario in which buildings dating to this period would have been completely subsumed by later development, making the identification of late medieval/early post-medieval structural evidence extremely difficult. Foundations of buildings evidenced from documentary and cartographic sources from the eighteenth century were identified. These were associated with frontage development along Westgate Street and with the development of Dawson's Court.

In conclusion, the investigations at the former Parcels Office have provided the opportunity to investigate the development of a small area of Newcastle from the Roman period through to the early twentieth century, although much of the archaeological resource was difficult to interpret due to significant post-medieval and modern disturbance. Even so, the investigations have revealed some important information about the area, including the presence of a medieval leather industry within the city walls and evidence to suggest that the structural footprints and boundaries of what would later form the established post-medieval Westgate Street were already taking form during the thirteenth century. The archaeological work undertaken on site has also successfully shown that significant archaeological remains can still occur, even in the most heavily urbanised areas.

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