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Summary

Excavations at 44 Clarence Street, York, by Antony Dickson in 2006 produced an unusual late medieval vessel which could not be precisely paralleled in form or fabric. It was recommended that analysis of this vessel was undertaken and the present paper is a result of that analysis.

The vessel is identified here as a product of the North Yorkshire whiteware potteries located on the western foothills of the Hambleton Hills and appears to have been a copy of late medieval Low Countries types.

Description

Form and manufacture

The vessel is wheelthrown and globular-bodied with a squared rim, diameter c 140mm, and has a rod-sectioned handle luted to the girth and outer edge of the rim. The body handle join is strengthened by thumbing on the interior. The exterior has a glossy pale olive (5Y 7/4) to olive (5Y 5/4) glaze, which does not extend over the handle (which suggests that the vessel was dipped in glaze, holding onto the handle). The glaze colour suggests local reduction and is probably an indication that the vessel was fired one rather than given a biscuit firing and then a second glaze firing.

A deliberate ridge or cordon is present on the shoulder but otherwise the vessel is plain.

At $\times 20$ magnification the fabric is seen to be tempered with moderate quartzose sand grains, well-sorted and between c 0.5mm and 0.8mm across. The groundmass is fine-textured, pink (7.5YR 7/4), and sparse fine mica is visible.

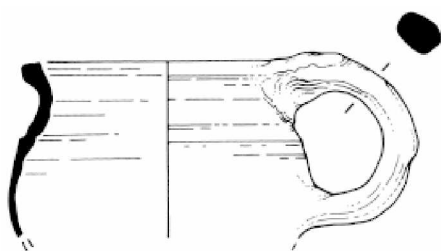


Figure 1
Late medieval whiteware vessel
from 44 Clarence Street, York.
Scale 1:4

Thin section analysis

The following inclusions were noted in thin section:

Quartz Moderate subangular and rounded grains ranging from c 0.1mm to 0.8mm. The smaller grains tend to be more angular and the grains appear to be bimodal, with peaks at c 0.2mm and c 0.5mm. Some of the grains have a thin brown coating but since these grains are closest to the original surface of the sherd they are probably a post-burial infill of the shrinkage gap between the quartz and groundmass. Some of the grains have one or more straight edge, indicative of overgrowth with no trace of the original grain boundary. Most grains are monocrystalline and unstrained but monocrystalline strained grains and polycrystalline grains occur. The latter include strained crystals with sutured boundaries and unstrained mosaic quartz. These features indicate that some of the grains come from metamorphic rocks.

Clay pellets Sparse inclusionless pellets up to 0.5mm across, slightly lighter in colour than the groundmass.

Muscovite Rare sheaves up to 0.2mm long.

The groundmass is light brown, optically anisotropic and contains sparse angular quartz and muscovite.

Chemical analysis

Chemical analysis was undertaken at Royal Holloway College, London, under the supervision of Dr J N Walsh using Inductively-Coupled Plasma Spectroscopy. A range of major elements were measured as percent oxides (Appendix 1) and a range of minor and trace elements was measured in parts per million (Appendix 2). Silica was not measured but was estimated by subtraction of the total measured oxides from 100%. The data were then normalised to aluminium.

The features observed in thin section are similar to those of some Surrey Whiteware vessels (*eg* Kingston-type ware Pearce and Vince 1988) as well as to late 12th- to 13th-century York Glazed ware (Jennings 1992).

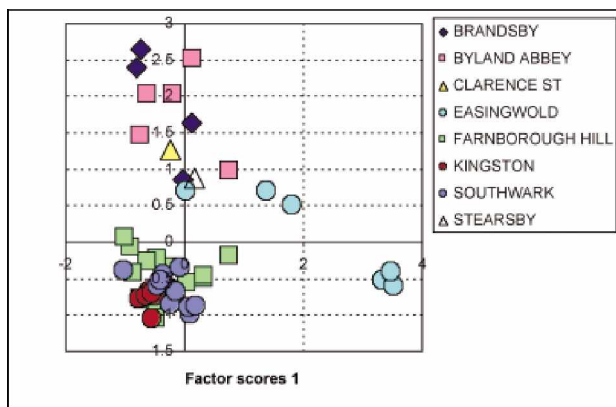


Figure 2

Factor analysis of this data (omitting mobile elements – calcium, phosphorus, strontium and the rare earth elements) indicates four main factors and a plot of the factor scores for the two main factors clearly indicates two clusters, one consisting of Surrey products and the other North Yorkshire products which can be subdivided on the basis of the F1 and F2 scores into an Easingwold group and the rest. The Clarence Street vessel falls into the Bransby/Byland/Stearsby group.

Neither type was in production in the late medieval period, when this vessel is likely to have been made and the contemporary late medieval wares are Coarse Border Ware and Bransby-type ware.

ICPS data is available for all these wares and a dataset consisting of production waste from sites in Surrey and North Yorkshire, and finds from YAT excavations in York was compared with the Clarence Street find.

The Surrey data consists of samples from Farnborough Hill, Kingston-upon-Thames and Southwark and the Yorkshire data consists of samples from the Bransby kiln excavated by J Le Patourel; a sample from the Stearsby kiln; possible wasters of York Glazed ware from Byland Abbey and sherds of a 12th-century gritty ware recently identified as a North Yorkshire product contemporary with York Gritty ware, from a site at Easingwold.

Discussion

The Clarence Street vessel is identified here as a North Yorkshire, Hambleton Hills, product. However, its form is clearly late medieval in date and imitative of Low Countries redware vessels (such as the two-handled, footed cooking pots (Hurst, Neal, and van Beuningen 1986, Fig 59) or single handled tripod pipkins, Hurst *et al* 1986, Fig 60). These Low Countries vessels not only have the large rod handles found on the Clarence Street vessel but also the cordon on the shoulder. This feature is probably itself a skeuomorph of cast copper-alloy vessels which are also mostly of late medieval date.

The chemical similarity of the Clarence Street vessel to York Glazed ware and North Yorkshire gritty ware vessels from Easingwold is probably due to the fact

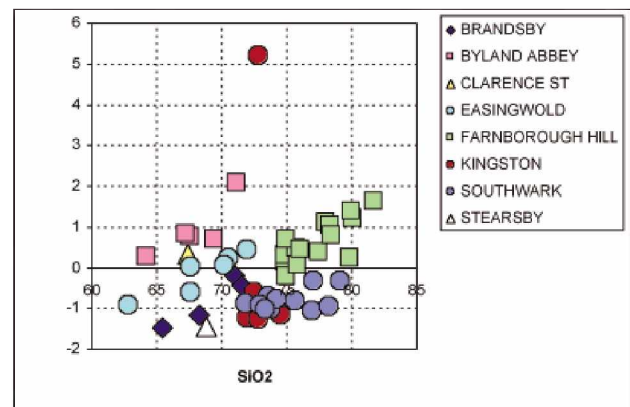


Figure 3

The Factor 3 scores do not separate any of the groups but the Factor 4 scores (essentially a reflection of zirconium and cobalt values) separate individual groups within the two main clusters. This is made clear by including the estimated silica values, which distinguish the Surrey and North Yorkshire groups. The diagram shows a plot of estimated silica scores against F4 scores and in this plot the Clarence Street vessel plots between the Byland and Easingwold groups.

that all three groups are deliberately tempered with quartzose sand and that the main discriminating element is zirconium, which is present mainly in zircon grains. The sand used to temper these vessels therefore has a higher zirconium content than the Bransby and Stearsby vessels which contain similar quantities of silica, but from a different source, the parent clay.

The discovery of this vessel requires a reconsideration of the classification of North Yorkshire medieval whitewares. On the one hand, the visual similarity of this vessel's fabric to York Glazed ware is confirmed and this means that undecorated body sherds cannot be dated more closely than late 12th to late 14th/15th centuries. On the other hand, York Glazed ware is actually defined mainly on style and decoration and it would be clearer if fabric and form/style were treated separately.

Table 1 is an attempt to clarify the products of the Hambleton Hills Whiteware Industry and includes waste from Castle Howard, which was recovered from excavations undertaken by Time Team in 2002 (Vince 2002). Confusingly, the products of the latter industry are classified as Hambleton ware, but Castle Howard is actually in the Howardian Hills. It is proposed that the Clarence Street vessel and similar vessels containing quartzose sand temper not paralleled at the Bransby kiln are classified as Gritty Bransby-type ware.

Acknowledgements

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Table 1

pottery group	reference	abbreviation
Normandy White ware	this note	NORW
Normandy Gritty ware, found at Exeter	Hughes forthcoming	NORG
Normandy Gritty ware, found at Leith	This note	Leith NORG
Northern France, found at Boston	Vince 2005	NFREM
Northern France; found at Exeter, Southampton,	Hughes forthcoming	NFRE
Worcester and Dublin	McCutcheon 2006	
Rouen ware from Bergen, major elements only	Deroeux <i>et al</i> 1994	ROUEN
Dublin and Viborg	McCutcheon 2006	
La Londe ware	Vince 2006	ROUEN UGW
Early Glazed Ware from Rouen	Vince unpublished	ROUEN EGW
Early Glazed Ware from York	Vince unpublished	EGW

Table 2

element	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Fe ₂ O ₃	0.862	0.143	0.119
MgO	0.834	-0.446	0.232
K ₂ O	0.655	-0.525	0.405
TiO ₂	-0.024	0.622	0.066
Na ₂ O	0.108	0.036	0.501
sum of squares	1.879	0.883	0.487
percent of variance	37.6	17.7	9.7