

SBDG15 GRINTON TEST PIT 59

Owners: Paul & Clare Brown
Address: Swale Hall, Harkerside
Date: 18th July 2015
Dug By: Jackie Snow, Ric Carter, Shelagh Standen, Jane & Tom Dinsdale, Will Swales, Vicky Best, Tristen Brown, Graham Smith

Position:

- Latitude 54°22'52.52"N Longitude 1°56'16.77"W
- Swale Hall is a 17th century, Grade II listed building whose history has been extremely well documented* by one of the pit diggers Will Swales.
- The test pit was located in the garden to the south east of the Hall with the intention of avoiding an earlier vegetable plot.
- It is believed this area may have been the site of a mill and so there was always the possibility of uncovering earlier structures.

Pit Description:

- The pit was marked out, planned and the turf lifted as usual.
- The early contexts 1&2 were predominantly soil but a stony rubble layer became more pronounced in 3 & 4 but did not appear to be structural.
- In 5 a significant layer of burnt shale was observed across the whole pit.
- The natural was reached at a depth of around 50 – 60 cms and with no finds being recovered deeper than context 5. An area to the north of the pit was taken down to 65 cms to confirm natural deposits.
- In addition to the pottery, typical domestic debris was found, including animal bone, glass, metal objects, coal and clinker associated with the burnt layers.

Finds:

Test Pit 59: 108 sherds, 321 grams

There were five fragments of late medieval reduced ware from this pit, one, possibly two, of local post-medieval type and a small fragment of a Staffordshire type early post-medieval ware. There were two groups of sherds of cream-coloured refined earthenwares. These may both be 18th century creamwares but in small fragments its identification can be problematic. If they are it is possible some of the red earthenwares (including black glazed) could also be 18th century and the quantity of 19th century material relatively small.

Conclusions:

The pottery date confirm occupation on the site from the 14th & 15th centuries which is in line with the evidence for earlier buildings on the site. The exact site of the mill however still remains elusive.

Thanks:

We must thank Paul and Clare Brown for allowing us to dig this pit and for the sustaining refreshments. The enthusiasm and commitment of the digging team was as ever excellent.

* <http://www.willswales1.webspace.virginmedia.com/Index.html>

written by: Rob Nicholson
date: 28th October 2015

TP 59 Finds catalogue

cont xt	type	Cou nt	weig ht	dati ng	comment
1	red	1	6		
1	red slipped	2	7		
1	stoneware	1	31		jam jar base
1	ungl red	1	13		
1	whiteware	1	1		
1	yellow	1	2		
2	black gl red	5	9		sm bit of handle is reduced (grey) fabric)
2	china	2	3		
2	creamware?	16	17		small flakey bits
2	late medieval reduced	1	5	14th/ 15th	
2	local pm?	1	2	17th/ 18th ?	bright green gl
2	pipe stem x1	0	0		
2	red slipped	5	32		rim
2	Staffs type	1	2	18th c.	brown outer yellow int
2	ungl red	1	2	?	?rim
2	whiteware	17	13		
2	yellow	3	3		white stripes
3	black gl red	6	13		
3	creamware	13	20	18th ?	incl some bits of plate rim
3	late medieval reduced	3	39	14th/ 15th	incl bit of strap handle
3	local pm	1	21	17th/ 18th	buff fabric, green gl, handle?
3	red	6	14		

cont xt	type	Cou nt	weig ht	dati ng	comment
3	red slipped	4	36		
3	stone bead	0	0		
3	whiteware	8	11		misc
3	whiteware?	1	2		rough burnt
4	black gl red	1	2		
4	brown gl stoneware	1	5		chunky
4	late medieval reduced	1	1	14th/ 15th	
4	stoneware	1	4	?	ungl
4	ungl red	1	4		
4	whiteware	1	0		sm bit rim
4	yellow	1	1		brown band

For the purposes of the pottery analysis, we have defined the following historical periods;

Roman – 1st to mid 5th Century

Medieval – 13th and early 14th Century

Late Medieval - mid 14th, 15th and 16th Centuries

Notes on the Pottery:

Generally speaking a meaningful date bracket cannot be applied to a large proportion of the sherds recovered from the test pits. Other than the medieval material present there are other datable types such as tin-glazed earthenware, white salt-glazed stoneware and creamware; but red earthenware, of all types, for instance, has a long life and particularly when only small fragments are present, is not closely dateable. Where it is associated with say, creamware or tin-glazed earthenware it could well be 18th century. For most redwares a date category has not been assigned. However, some Test Pit summaries may indicate how strong the earlier dating indicators are. Anything with no date against it in the catalogue falls into the general late post-medieval (lpm) background noise category.

A few more abbreviations have crept into the catalogue. I hope most will be obvious (eg. gl for glaze or glazed, misc for miscellaneous, int (inside) and ext (outside)). Let me know if not.

Some explanations of wording used in the 'types' column

- *red slipped* is the standard post-medieval kitchenware with internal white slip coating
- *red slip dec* means there is trailing or banding rather than an overall slip coat
- *red* on its own is any plain glazed red earthenware
- *black glazed red* is difficult to date especially in small fragments as there are black-glazed redwares in the later 16th and 17th centuries as well as throughout the 18th and into the 19th century.
- *whiteware* refers to the refined table wares of 19th century onwards which can be transfer printed (eg. willow pattern), sponged etc.
- *yellow*, i.e. yellow ware refers to the 19th century type of pottery often found with white slip bands and sometimes 'mocha' decoration. Used for good quality kitchenwares, and vessels such as chamber pots. Sometimes within this category are other non-white glazed fragments which appear to be generally the same type, i.e. the background glaze colour may be buff or pale pinkish-buff rather than yellow.
- *local post-medieval* and *local red* are wares probably with a fairly local source. Similar types elsewhere in North Yorkshire are called Ryedale and Osmotherley type wares. The fabric can vary from light red to orange and buff or be partly reduced grey. Glazes often have a greenish tinge. Typical vessels would be bowls, dishes and jars.
- *creamware* is as described! The date assigned is 18th century. It is still around in the early 19th c. but is basically a mid to late 18th type. There is a general chronological trend to a lighter colour glaze so small later fragments may just get included with 'whiteware' in the table. Conversely when only small flakes are present dating must be open to some doubt.
- *pearlware* begins in the later 18th century and continues into the early 19th gradually becoming 'whiteware' as the blue-grey tint to the glaze lightens - again a broad chronological trend. Mostly decorated, frequently with shell edge rim mainly in blue. It is not easy to identify in small fragments.

Apart from the late reduced wares the medieval pottery present was mainly buff, buff/pink or more iron-rich orange/oxidised wares. Although there was much that was not clearly diagnostic most of this material can probably be described as Tees Valley ware.

Jenny Vaughan
September 2015