

SBDR13 REETH TEST PIT I

Owners: Reeth Parish Council
Address: The Green, Reeth
Date: 14th/15th April 2013
Dug By: Alan Mills, Judith Mills, Peter Denison-Edson, Ann Russell, John Russell, Ric Carter, Mike Walton, Flora Smith, Graham Smith, Shirley Gale, Stephen Eastmead, David Metcalfe

Position:

- The site of the biannual Reeth bonfire.
- NGR SE 03836 99251 225m OD

Pit Description:

- The first test pit dug in order to test our procedures and timing
- Dug and recorded in accord with the HEFA guidelines **except** the soil was not sieved.
- A light-grey fine-grained friable silty sandy top soil containing a number of small finds extended to a depth of approximately 20cm, followed by a layer of around 20cm of a light brown/yellow-ish fine-grained friable silty sandy soil with a larger number of finds.
- A layer of small broken stones, mainly 5-8 cm in size, was encountered at a depth of around 12-15cm in the North-Eastern corner of the pit. This was considered to be natural.
- Natural undisturbed ochre-coloured clay was encountered at a depth of approximately 40-45cm. This final layer was dug for another 10cm in the Western half of the pit to verify it was the natural surface.
- The natural was reached at a depth of ca. 45 cm

Finds:

Test Pit I (SBDR 13): 35 sherds, 67 grams

There was one sherd of Staffordshire type slipware from (2) and a clay pipe stem from (3) with a large bore. These were the only fragments indicating a date earlier than 19th century. See also Appendix I.

Conclusions:

- The dig went well and was completed by 1.15pm, demonstrating that it is possible to complete further pits on the Green in a day.
- The majority of the finds appear to be early 20th / 19th century and are typical of midden material.
- One piece of pot from the top soil appears to be Staffordshire Slipware, possibly late 17th or 18th century. A musket ball and marble could also be somewhat earlier than the majority of the finds.
- Despite being found under the site of the annual bonfire which has been held on this site for a number of years, none of the material shows any signs of burning. It is unclear how these finds got there.
- There is no evidence to suggest that Reeth Green has been cultivated in the recent past; perhaps surprisingly it was not dug as part of the Dig for Victory campaign in World War II.
- For a large number of years, this area has been the site of the annual Reeth fair with the fairground peoples' caravans on site for a number of days each year so perhaps the mainly 19th century and later material is from this source.
- The musket ball is intriguing. It does not appear to have been fired or if it was it did not hit anything hard as it is not significantly deformed; nor has it been in the fire as it would have melted. It could have simply been dropped at some stage or maybe even made locally, given the significance of the lead industry in this area for a number of centuries.

Thanks: to Reeth Parish Council.

Written by: Alan Mills

Date: 14th October 2014

TP01 (2013) Finds Catalogue:

context	type	count	weight	dating	comment
2?		3	6		Don't know what this is, hard white fabric with matt grey outer
2	staffs type	1	3	17th/18th	
2	red slipped	1	0		
2	black gl red	1	2		
2	whiteware	3	5		1 has sponge dec, 1 may be yellow ware
2	pipe stem x 1	0	0		with moulding
3	black gl red	7	24		some are chunky frags
3	red slipped	4	7		
3	red	4	12		perhaps a 'refined' red
3	whiteware	11	8		
3	pipe stem x 1	0	0	17th/18th	large bore
3	pipe stem x 1	0	0		

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

Appendix I.

A report on the finds made shortly after the dig.

- A total of 80 finds was recovered; 24 from the top soil (contexts 1 & 2) and 56 from the layer below (contexts 3 & 4); nothing was found in the ochre-coloured clay below.
- The twenty-four finds from the top soil consisted of the following:
 - 1 x heavily corroded nail, 1 x unidentified corroded metal
 - 4 x bone fragments, 1 x small piece of coal, 2 x corroded buttons?
 - 6 x small pieces of glass, 8 x sherds of pottery, 1 x piece of pipe stem
- The fifty-six items from contexts 3 and 4 consisted of the following:
 - 1 x musket ball weighing 2 oz (calibre 0.84", 8 gauge)ⁱⁱ
 - 1 x clay? marble, 1 x part of a clog iron, 1 x base of a 12 gauge shotgun cartridge, 1 x small piece of coal, 2 x unidentified corroded pieces of metal
 - 7 x pieces of bone plus 1 x animal tooth (sheep?)
 - 34 x sherds of pottery, 2 x piece of pipe stem
 - 4 x small pieces of glass, 1 x piece of a slate pencil^{iii iv}

ⁱ David Allinson, long time Reeth resident, pers comm.

ⁱⁱ Early firearms had such large calibres so this is possibly for an early musket, perhaps a matchlock of the late 16th C.

ⁱⁱⁱ Slate pencils were in use with writing slates in some schools in Swaledale until around 1950; David Allinson, pers comm

^{iv} This slate pencil might have been made at the Pencil Mill located on the south bank of the Tees below Widdibank Farm at NY8485 2985 in Upper Teesdale. Tim

Pottery Analysis

Notes on the Pottery:

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

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. As far as plotting the distribution of sherds in date categories is concerned there are obvious problems with assigning the redwares and for most this has not been done. 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 background noise category.

I have tried to keep abbreviations to a minimum in the catalogue to avoid long lists of explanation. Those that are there, or have crept in, I hope will be obvious (eg. gl for glaze or glazed, misc for miscellaneous, int

(inside) and ext (outside)).

Some explanations of wording used in the 'types' column

- red slipped is the standard post-medieval kitchenware with internal white slip coating
- red on its own is any plain glazed red earthenware
- black glazed red is very 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 kitchenware, 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, as the names suggest, wares probably with a fairly local source. Similar types elsewhere in North Yorkshire are called Ryedale 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.

Jenny Vaughan October 2014

Laurie, pers comm.