

SBDR14 REETH TEST PIT 29

Owners: Damian and Adele Charlton
Address: Daleholm, Reeth
Date: 19/7/14
Dug By: Damian, Adele and Barney Charlton, Emma Watson, David Saville, Linda Parrott, Marion Donnelly, Jane Towler, Miles Johnson

Position:

- Test pit area chosen on the upper lawn between Daleholm and Reeth Museum's building (formerly Reeth School). The site had potentially been the former school's playground.
- 54°23'20.35"N 1°56'26.05"W

Pit Description:

- The pit was dug and recorded in accord with the HEFA guidelines and all soil was sieved.
- The weather was fairly inclement, with rain showers on both days. However, at the end of the first day, there was torrential rain which halted work and caused total site abandonment, at the end of context 5, just as we were about to record the level. The weather became extremely inclement again at the end of the dig. Nevertheless, throughout, the work proceeded well.
- Context 7 contained a tightly cobbled surface to the east of the test pit, with rubble alongside this in context 7 and 10cm of rubble and packing material in context 8.
- Above this was 60cm of dark, rich topsoil, which contained huge amounts of finds. This included large sherds of pot, other pottery, metal nails and a hook, clay pipe stems, bottle and window glass, coal, clinker, animal bone/teeth (see pottery analysis below). There was one piece of 13th century pottery within this assemblage, as well as 8 sherds of definite 18th century pottery, and one of early 19th century pottery. Nevertheless, the largest group within this assemblage were whitewares of 19th century, or indeed later, date. Context 3 produced the profile of a white salt-glazed stoneware plate and part of a plate rim also came from context 5 with other small fragments from contexts 1, 7 and 8. There were other indications of pre-19th century activity including several clay pipe stems (see pottery analysis below), but most were associated with later material.
- Just above the cobbled surface, there was a clear layer of smashed window glass, which must have infuriated the person who originally dropped the pane, as the hundreds of tiny sherds were on the cobbled surface and had dropped down into many gaps between the cobbles, eventually finding their way into the rubble beneath.
- Below the cobbled layer was more dark brown/black soil, with a paler mid-orangey brown subsoil below that. 18 further pottery finds were uncovered within contexts 8-10, with non-natural finds in every context. In fact, the natural was unfortunately not reached in this test pit but the work stopped at 120cm for safety reasons.

Finds:

- Test Pit 29: 359 sherds, 916 grams
- This was by far the largest pit assemblage from the Big Dig. The largest group within this assemblage were whitewares of 19th-century, or indeed later, date. There were four sherds of medieval pottery, one from context 4 and another from context 8, both of which were among other later pottery sherds. However, there were also 2 13th-century sherds from context 10, which were not associated with any other pottery. Context 3 produced the profile of a white salt-glazed stoneware plate and part of a plate rim also came from context 5 with other small fragments from contexts 1, 7 and 8. There were other indications of pre-19th-century activity including several clay pipe stems (see pottery analysis below), but most were associated with later material.

Conclusions:

The finds suggest that this location may have been used in a domestic context in the medieval period (13th-century). The location must then have been cobbled over at some point, probably for the school playground. Later, probably very early in the 20th-century, the end terrace house was built and the area of the test pit must have been infilled to raise the overall garden to a level area. However, puzzlingly, many of the sherds found in the upper layers were large and had sharp edges, so the material used as infill was not taken from nearby fields. It looks as though the Daleholm garden was a sort-of midden for a time, but only for pottery, metal and glass. There would certainly have been far larger quantities of general domestic refuse (including huge amounts of animal bone), had the site been Reeth's general midden.

Thanks:

Thanks to the homeowners, Damian and Adele, who worked tirelessly on this test-pit along with the volunteers, while also providing many refreshment breaks and comical stories. The test pit was great fun and everyone's undampened spirit, despite the weather, was much appreciated.

written by: Emma Watson
date: 4th November 2014

TP 29 – Finds Catalogue

context	type	count	weight	dating	comment
I	brown gl stoneware	2	37		bowl rim, grey int
I	brown gl white	1	1		
I	china	4	9		2 are burnt, other 2 seaweed transfer
I	pipe stem x 3	0	0		
I	red	3	5		
I	red slipped	3	12		
I	white salt gl stoneware	1	1	18th	
I	whiteware	12	10		misc
I	yellow	1	0		
2	brown gl stoneware	1	1		small rim
2	brown gl whiteware	3	29		joining, ?tea pot
2	burnt	2	4		a whiteware probably
2	creamware	1	0	18th	small hollow ves frag
2	misc late	3	6		

context	type	count	weight	dating	comment
2	pearlware	1	2	e. 19th	shell edge rim
2	pipe stem x 3	0	0		also small frag bowl
2	red	4	25		one main bit - clubbed base, 1 small sherd with trace of slip trail, one chip may be earleir
2	red slipped	7	40		rim
2	stoneware	7	102		base ridged jam jar
2	whiteware	51	74		misc - transfer, sponged and plain
2	yellow	7	12		2 have white bands
3	black gl red	3	18		
3	brown gl stoneware	1	19		same vessel as in (2)
3	burnt	3	4		
3	china	2	3		
3	creamware	6	5	18th	flakes
3	mottled	2	6		brown mottled white fabric, strap handle
3	porcelain	1	1		
3	red	4	23		
3	red slipped	4	19		
3	stoneware	5	13		ridged jam jar
3	stoneware	2	7		'modern'
3	white salt gl stoneware	1	16	18th	plate profile
3	whiteware	47	59		misc - transfer, sponged and plain
3	yellow	5	6		
4	black gl red	2	1		
4	brown gl white	2	4		
4	burnt	3	4		small handle, these look like whiteware
4	china	5	15		base with transfer (willow), ?cup with gold band, silver lustre
4	medieval	1	11	13th	pale orange-buff with thin grey core, abraded
4	pipe bowl frag	0	0		with writing - prob late 19th
4	pipe stem	0	0	18th	
4	red	1	1		
4	red slipped	5	9		
4	stoneware	1	12		ribbed jam jar
4	whiteware	29	33		misc, 1 has bright yellow gl and gold band, rest usual mix
4	yellow	6	11		1 has white and brown bands
5	black gl red	1	1		flake
5	brown gl white	1	2?		
5	china	1	2		
5	pipe bowl frag	0	0		decorated
5	pipe stem x 4	0	0		
5	red	3	9		

context	type	count	weight	dating	comment
5	red slipped	4	18		
5	white salt gl stoneware	1	3	18th	bit of rim flange
5	whiteware	18	33		transfer and sponge
5	yellow	3	3		
6	black gl red	1	1		
6	brown gl white	1	1		
6	china	1	3		
6	figurine?	1	1		small bit moulding
6	lustre	3	6		pink lustre dec
6	pipe stem x 4	0	0		I has green gl
6	red	2	28		
6	red slipped	2	32		
6	whiteware	24	38		I piece says HO with ..ERS below
6	yellow	1	4		
7?		1	1		
7	creamware	4	7	18th	
7	creamware?	2	1		flakes, I has blue and brown bands
7	pipe bowl frag	0	0		small
7	red	1	1		with slip dec, thin
7	red slipped	2	2		
7	white salt gl stoneware	1	1	18th	
7	whiteware	7	4		
8	black gl red	5	16	18th?	2 vessels represented: bottom of handle, out-turned rim (shiny)
8	brown gl stoneware	1	4		thick
8	burnt	1	1		
8	medieval buff	1	9	13th	very worn
8	pipe bowl frag	0	0?		and v small stem frag
8	pipe stem x 1	0	0	17th/18th	
8	red	3	2		thin, I has slip dec
8	white salt gl stoneware	1	1	18th	
8	whiteware	4	5		
9	pipe bowl frag	0	0		
9	pipe stem x 4	0	0	17th/18th	I stem has spur
10	medieval buff	2	6	13th	

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.