

SBDR15 REETH TEST PIT 44

Owners: Caroline and Stephen Palmer

Address: 14 Hill Close, Reeth

Date: 16/05/15

Dug By: Emma Watson, Linda Parrott, Caroline Palmer, Stephen Palmer, Mike Keenan, Sheila Keenan, Jonathan Binns, James Binns, Andrea Dixon, Jane Harrison, Richard Farmery, Jim Brightman.

Position:

- Latitude 54°23'23.92"N Longitude 1°56'30.06"W
- Test pit area chosen on the raised lawn to the south-west of the house, in the middle of the grassed area, towards the back garden wall of 14 Hill Close.

Pit Description:

- The pit was dug and recorded in accord with the HEFA guidelines and all soil was sieved.
- The weather was good on both days, allowing the dig to proceed well on both days, despite an almost complete change in diggers (apart from Emma Watson and Linda Parrott).
- Contexts 1 & 2 contained only topsoil, with tree roots and a selection of pottery, coal, glass, plastic, metal and clay pipe, all of which was in an unsecured context. Nevertheless, the pottery dates ranged from 13th to 18th century, and one of the pipe bowl fragments was of an early date.
- Contexts 3 to 5, approximately, contained a richer, mid-brown, more gravelly soil layer. Context 4 had a larger concentration than the other two contexts, but still only approximately 2% of the fill. The pottery was once again mixed, being 13th to 18th century, in date.
- Context 6 was sandy at the top, but became increasingly clayey through the context. The finds were a medium-length piece of twisted lead and a smaller piece of iron; nine small sherds of 13/14th century pottery, some of which had evidence of burning; some charcoal and a burnt hazelnut shell.
- Context 7 was of orangey-brown clay, which some thought to be natural. There was a consensus to continue to dig downwards, in spite of this. The finds, nevertheless, were similar to context 6, with four sherds of 13th/14th century pottery, some of which were burnt; clinker; bloom; and a long rope-like piece of lead.
- Context 8, once again, had the appearance of a natural layer of clay. However, perseverance from the digging team, to clarify the situation, paid off. The layer provided one rim of black burnished pottery, which the report stated, had not been identified, but might be earlier than the 13th/14th century sherds in the context above it. Another piece of lead was recovered, as well as flints, charcoal and clinker.
- Context 9 uncovered a 'natural clay' layer, which was of a reddier-orange colour than the other soil seen within the test-pit. It was decided, with no finds, to stop at 80-85 cm deep.

Finds:

Test pit 44: 158 sherds, 419 grams

There were 20 sherds of medieval pottery from this test pit including some late medieval reduced ware, but also other 13th/14th c. material. There was also one so far unidentified sherd which may be earlier still. Contexts [6] to [8] produced only medieval [or earlier] pottery. Other contexts also contained early post-medieval material including fragments of clay pipe bowl and tin-glazed earthenware suggesting that some of the less diagnostic pottery (e.g. red wares) might also fit into the 17th/18th century date bracket rather than being broadly 19th century.

Discussion:

- There were 13th-18th century pottery sherds within this test-pit, with a possible earlier sherd in Context 8. Contexts 1-5 were fairly similar in the material recovered. Some sherds could not be securely dated but, to quote the test-pit 44 report, 'early post-medieval material including fragments of clay pipe bowl and tin-glazed earthenware' suggests 'that some of the less diagnostic pottery (e.g. red wares) might also fit into the 17th/18th century date bracket rather than being broadly 19th century'. This means that, although the pottery fragments are mixed, the lack of dates, other than 13th-18th century, provides a *terminus post quem* date for the top five layers of this test-pit, implying that the since the 18th century, the soil has not been disturbed. The lack of 15th or 16th century pottery within the top 5 contexts further suggests that the ground was ploughed/disturbed in the 17th/18th centuries, so pulling up earlier material from lower contexts.
- Certainly, this view stands, as from context 6 downwards, the only finds were 13th-14th century pottery, or earlier.
- The other finds in contexts 6-8 suggest some sort of industrial activity close to the test-pit, as all the finds were associated with burning and/or industrial processes.

Conclusions:

The finds suggest that this general vicinity may have been used in the medieval period as the location of some industrial activity/ workshop, although its exact locations has not been found. After this, ploughing or site disturbance in the 17th/18th centuries, churned up the land, bringing some medieval sherds close to the surface, as in Context 2. There is no evidence that the ground was disturbed, or the location used, between the 17th/18th centuries and the modern-day use of the site as a garden associated with a domestic dwelling.

Thanks:

Thanks to the homeowners, Caroline and Stephen Palmer, who provided much help and support, and refreshments. The test pit was hard work but very revealing. All the diggers' hard work was much appreciated.

written by: Emma Watson
completion date: 10th October 2015

TP 44 Finds catalogue

cont ext	type	Count	weight	dating	comment
1	black gl red	4	11		
1	creamware	1	2		
1	mottled ware	1	2		buff fabric with brown mottled gl
1	pipe bowl fragx2	0	0		small
1	pipe stem x1	0	0	17th	
1	whiteware	2	2		1 is simple rim with blue painted dec
2	?	3	2		small
2	black gl red	6	28	18th?	
2	burnt blackw	1	2		
2	med gritty	1	9	13th	pale fabric, simple rect/everted rim
2	med oxidised	1	2	13th/ 14th	
2	pipe bowl fragx2	0	0		1 v small, other looks early
2	pipe stem x7	0	0		
2	red	4	33		club base, others small
2	red slip dec	1	1	17th/ 18th	small hv
2	red slipped	2	14		
2	salt gl st	1	0		small grey frag
2	Staffs black gl	1	4	18th c?	pale orange buff, has a darker red slip and black gl
2	stoneware	1	5		pale brown ext, brown int
2	tin glazed	2	3	17th/ 18th c.	pale blue gl
2	whiteware	7	7		some maybe creamw
3	pipe stem xx2	0	0		1 is 17th other late
3	red	3	3		
3	tin glazed	1	0	17th/ 18th c.	v small
3	whiteware	4	3		1 sponge, 1 tp

cont ext	type	Cou nt	weig ht	dating	comment
4	?	5	2		
4	brown gl stoneware	2	2		
4	brown gl whiteware	3	5		1 is really black ?tea pots?
4	creamware	15	11	18th c.	flakey
4	local pm	3	5	17th/ 18th c.	
4	med gritty	1	3	13th	pink/buff
4	pipe bowl fragx2	0	0		moulded dec
4	pipe stem x8	0	0		
4	post med?	2	5		2 softish orange
4	red	20	81		very misc, 1 has slip trail, 1 with int slip, 1 thick with slip line
4	red slipped	4	43		main bit is brown mottled base
4	reduced blackw	2	2	?	
4	rhen st?	1	9	?	brown sl speckled gl
4	tin glazed	1	1	17th/ 18th c.	
4	white salt gl stoneware	2	3	18th	bit uncertain about this!
4	whiteware	9	5		
4	yellow	3	6		blue and white bands
5	?	5	3		
5	black gl	1	2		more pale brown than red
5	brown gl stoneware	1	0		small!
5	brown gl whiteware	1	1		
5	late medieval reduced	4	47	14th/ 15th	bit of jug rim, all are worn
5	pipe bowl frag	0	0	e. 18th	actually 3 bits but are from 1 bowl
5	pipe bowl frag	0	0	e. 18th	has stars on spur
5	pipe stem x1	0	0		

cont ext	type	Count	weight	dating	comment
5	red	4	7		misc
5	red slip dec	4	4	17th/ 18th c.	small hv or bowl with sl everted rim
5	red slipped	2	2		1 has sgraffito line, 1 brown mottling
5	tin glazed	1	5	17th/ 18th c.	pale blue gl
5	whiteware	1	1		may be creamw, has brown in impressed line and 'chain' dec
6	med orange	2	2	13th/ 14th	
6	medieval	2	5	13th/ 14th	grey-brown part ox with patch brownish gl
6	medieval buff	5	11	13th/ 14th	
7	med orange	4	9	13th/ 14th	joining, has some white inclusions
8	med gritty?	1	4	??	rim, thin dark grey with some brown surface oxidation, not sure what this is

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