

A Post-Excavation Assessment of the Romano-British pottery from the 2019 excavation at The Hagg, Swaledale, North Yorkshire for the Swaledale and Arkengarthdale Archaeology Group (SWAAG)

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Introduction

Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. (PCA) was commissioned by the SWAAG to carry out the post-excavation assessment of the Romano-British pottery recovered during the 2019 community excavations of The Hagg, Swaledale (site code HFS19). The following report presents the results of the identification, quantification, and dating of the assemblage.

Methodology

All fragments were fully quantified using the standard measures of sherd count, weight, and Estimated Vessel Equivalents (EVEs) in accordance with the guidelines set out by the Study Group of Roman Pottery (MPRG 2016) and standards used by PCA specialists. All data has been recorded in a relational databased based on the template used by PCA specialists, which is ultimately based on that of Museum of London Archaeology Services (Symonds 2002).

Sherds were examined by hand lens under 10x magnification and fabrics have been identified and recorded with the help of the *National Roman Fabric Reference Collection* (Tomber and Dore 1998), the fabric type series established for the Catterick pottery assemblages (Bell and Evans 2002), and the pottery report of previous seasons (Gerrard 2014, Hudak 2018a and 2018b). Forms have been recorded with the help of the Catterick type series (Bell and Evans 2002).

Fabrics

DOR BB1:

Dorset Black Burnished Ware 1 – for details see Tomber and Dore (1998)

MAH WH:

Mancetter Hartshill White Ware – for details see Tomber and Dore (1998)

CRA PA:

Crambeck Parchment Ware – for details see Tomber and Dore (1998)

CRA RE:

Crambeck Reduced Ware – for details see Tomber and Dore (1998)

OXF RS:

Oxfordshire Red Colour-Coated Ware – for details see Tomber and Dore (1998) and Young (1977)

SAMCG:

Central Gaulish Samian – for details see Webster (1996) and Tomber and Dore (1998)

SAMEG:

East Gaulish Samian – for details see Webster (1996) and Tomber and Dore (1998)

The range of sandy grey and oxidised wares, and calcite gritted wares in the assemblages compare well to a range of fabrics present and described in the type series for the Catterick CfA excavations (Bell and Evans 2002).

O3A: sandy oxidised fabric with pale grey core and orange surfaces – for more details see Bell and Evans 2002: 353

R1 and R1C: sandy reduced fabrics, R1 including Dales-type ware – for more details see Bell and Evans 2002: 353

R4: This fabric is the East Yorkshire Calcite Gritted ware at Catterick (Bell and Evans 2002: 354), which is the same as the Knapton and the Huntcliff types (also cf. HUN CG in Tomber and Dore 1998, and Late Gritty Wares in Gerrard 2014). Updated dating of forms was available from Bidwell and Croom 2010.

R4A: Dales Ware (Bell and Evans 2002: 354), which is the same as DAL SH in Tomber and Dore 1998.

Assemblage composition and dating

The 2019 season produced a total of 281 fragments weighing 4.527 kg and representing 5.55 EVEs. The pottery survived in a variety of states, but most fragments were somewhat abraded, and a considerable number showed signs of burning possibly related to the use of the vessels. Mean sherd weight is at 16.11 g, which indicates a degree of redeposition had taken place.

There is a very limited range of fabrics present in this assemblage with only 12 different types identified (Table 1, Chart 1), all but one of which were present in the 2018 season assemblage (Hudak 2018b). The new type comprises a single base sherd of a dish or bowl in the Oxfordshire Red Colour-Coated fine ware fabric, normally dated to AD270-400+ (Young 1977). The overall date of the assemblage falls to the 4th century AD based on the abundance of typical late Roman fabrics characteristic of the area with a few residual late 2nd and 3rd century sherds.

Fabric	SC	Wt(g)	EVEs
CRA PA	8	181	0.26
CRA RE	30	457	0.82
DOR BB1	4	19	
MAH WH	2	26	
O3A	6	18	0.05
OXF RS	1	78	
R1	15	310	0.35
R1C	1	9	
R4	207	3366	4.02
R4A	3	12	
SAMCG	3	39	0.05
SAMEG	1	12	
TOTAL	281	4527	5.55

Table 1 – Quantification of the assemblage by sherd count, weight (g), and EVEs per fabric

The single most common fabric in this assemblage is East Yorkshire Calcite-Gritted ware (R4) accounting for 73.7% of the total sherd count, 74.4% of weight, and 72.4% of EVEs. It includes several rim fragments of Huntcliff-type jars (J6.3, J6.6, J6.7, or Gillam 162-3) from a minimum of 12

different vessels, as well as one of a thick everted-rim jar (J6.2), and two straight-walled dishes one with a slight bead and another with an external groove (D1.1, cf. Bidwell and Croom 2010: Fig.4.2/4). Several fragments were discoloured to a reddish-brown colour, which might be the result of burning, most likely through the usage of the vessels for cooking.

The only other fabrics present in considerable quantities are products of the Crambeck potteries (CRA RE and CRA PA), mostly the reduced wares, and reduced sandy wares (R1). Crambeck products combined comprise 13.5% of sherd count, 14.1% of weight, and 19.5% of EVEs including beaded and flanged bowls (B17.5 and B17.7, or Corder type 1), a plain-rim dish (D1.1 or Corder 2) and constricted necked jars (CJ9.1, or Corder 3) in the reduced fabric, and mortaria in the parchment fabric (M47, or Corder 6, and Corder 7 types). Reduced sandy wares (R1) account for 5.3% of sherd count, 6.9% of weight, and 6.3% of EVEs with only three diagnostic sherds present: one showing the complete profile of a plain-rim dish (D1.1), a small rim fragment of an everted rim jar with a thick squared-off rim (J6.5), and one of the distinct profile of Dales-type jars (J12.2, or Gillam 157). There was another small rim fragment of a Dales-type jar in an oxidised fabric (O3A), while there were only three small fragments of real Dales Shelly ware in the assemblage (R4A).

There is again a meagre amount of pottery in the assemblage dated to the mid-2nd to 3rd centuries AD represented by fragments of Terra Sigillata and Mancetter-Hartshill mortaria (MAH WH). There are four sherds of Terra Sigillata, one certainly from the East Gaulish potteries (AD150-300) and three most likely from a Central Gaulish source including a rim of a Dragendorff 31 type dish (Dr31, AD150-250). There are only two fragments of MAH WH mortaria, a severely damaged rim fragment, most likely of a type M81 dated AD160-210 (Bell and Evans 2002), and a flange fragment of an indeterminate type. The heavily abraded nature of these sherds suggests residuosity, with the possibility of long-term retention for the Samian ware.

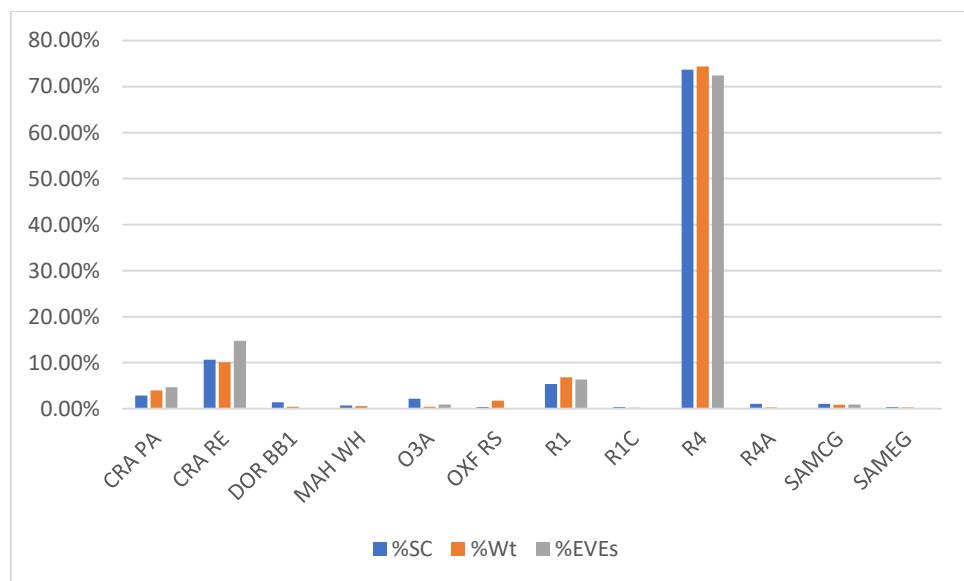


Chart 1 – Composition of the assemblage by percentage of sherd count, weight, and EVEs

In terms of functional analysis, the assemblage is heavily jar orientated with 4.39 EVEs of the total 5.55 EVEs with the Huntcliff types dominating (J6.2, J6.6, and J6.7). This would normally suggest a basic rural site type (Evans 2001), however, it must be born in mind that EVE values for this assemblage are just above the minimum threshold. Functional analysis combining the results of all seasons of excavations will be more informative.

Contextual analysis

The assemblage was recovered from 13 individually numbered contexts, the overburden and spoil from Areas 2, 3, and 4, and a single sherd was unassigned to any of the areas (Tables 2 and 3). Individual context assemblages are small (less than 30 sherds) and only three are medium-sized (31-100 sherds), which, however, contained nearly 60% of the entire site assemblage. Most contexts are dated by the pottery to around AD360-400+ due to the abundance of Huntcliff-type jars.

Context	SC	Wt(g)	EVEs	Context date
0	36	722	0.83	
50	1	18		AD160-210
59	54	773	1.3	AD360-400+
80	55	656	0.25	AD360-400+
86	1	3		AD50-400+
112	1	10		AD270-400+
115	12	110	0.15	AD360-400+
117	25	345	0.63	AD360-400+
123	9	53	0.13	AD360-400+
124	56	1236	1.41	AD360-400+
127	6	106	0.17	AD360-400+
129	18	434	0.68	AD360-375/400+
133	3	13		AD300-400+
134	4	48		AD300-400+
TOTAL	281	4527	5.55	

Table 2 – Distribution of the Roman pottery per context with context considered date

Area	SC	Wt(g)	EVEs
unknown	1	84	0.10
A1	1	18	
A2	174	3086	4.38
A3	100	1093	0.88
A4	5	246	0.19
TOTAL	281	4527	5.55

Table 3 – Distribution of the Roman pottery per excavation areas

Area 1 yielded a single sherd of a Mancetter-Hartshill mortarium from revetment (50). It is a heavily abraded rim fragment of a bead-and-flange type dated to AD160-210 (M81, Bell and Evans 2002), and is most likely residual.

Areas 2 and 3 yielded most of the pottery recovered from the site (Table 3, Chart 2). Area 2 produced nearly 62% of the entire site assemblage by sherd count, 68.2% of weight, and produced the greatest number of diagnostic sherds with 78.9% of EVEs. Most of the pottery was retrieved from two features, context (124), the rubble off the southern revetment base of the annexe (125), and context (59), the rubble off the bank. Context (124) yielded 56 sherds weighing 1.236 kg with a restricted range of fabrics present, R4, R1, and CRA RE. R4 dominates including six joining fragments of a Huntcliff-type jar making up 71% of the rim, followed by Crambeck reduced ware with four rim sherds of a flanged bowl accounting for 47% of its rim, which although do not join are from the same vessel (B17.7, or Corder 1). The context assemblage of (59) incorporated a far greater variety of

pottery such as a number of Huntcliff-type jars in R4, plain-rim dish in R1, a Corder 3 type jar in CRA RE, two fragments of Corder 6 mortaria likely to be from the same vessel, and a small heavily abraded base sherd of a Terra Sigillata bowl/dish.

The fill (129) of storage/drying pit (128) contained a smaller assemblage (18 sherds, 0.434 kg), however, it includes a great variety of vessels. There are rims of a minimum of three different Huntcliff-type jars in R4, a Dales-type jar in R1, the complete profile of a plain-rim dish in Crambeck reduced ware, and a rim fragment of a flanged bowl in the same fabric with a post-firing hole under the flange. This may indicate repair, although no rivet was present, or re-purposing of the vessel for a different function.

Area 3 contexts yielded 35.6% of the site assemblage by sherd count, 24.1% by weight, and 15.9% by EVEs, mostly from context (80), sandy clay accumulation associated with F1. This feature assemblage is also dominated by R4 with rims of two different Huntcliff-type jars. There are three, again very heavily abraded, fragments of Samian ware of three different vessels in this context, as well as a neck fragment of a Black-Burnished Ware 1 everted-rim jar (J6.7), and two tiny sherds in fabric R1. The only other stratified context in this area that yielded pottery in quantity is (117), the rubble off the Western enclosure wall with 23 sherds in fabric R4, including six joining fragments of a Huntcliff-type jar comprising 63% of the rim, and one tiny fragment each of DOR BB1 and R1.

Only five fragments of pottery were retrieved from Area 4, all from Overburdens 1 and 2, including a large jar base in R1, a flanged-bowl fragment in CRA RE, another Corder 6 type mortarium in CRA RE, and a minute fragment in fabric R4.

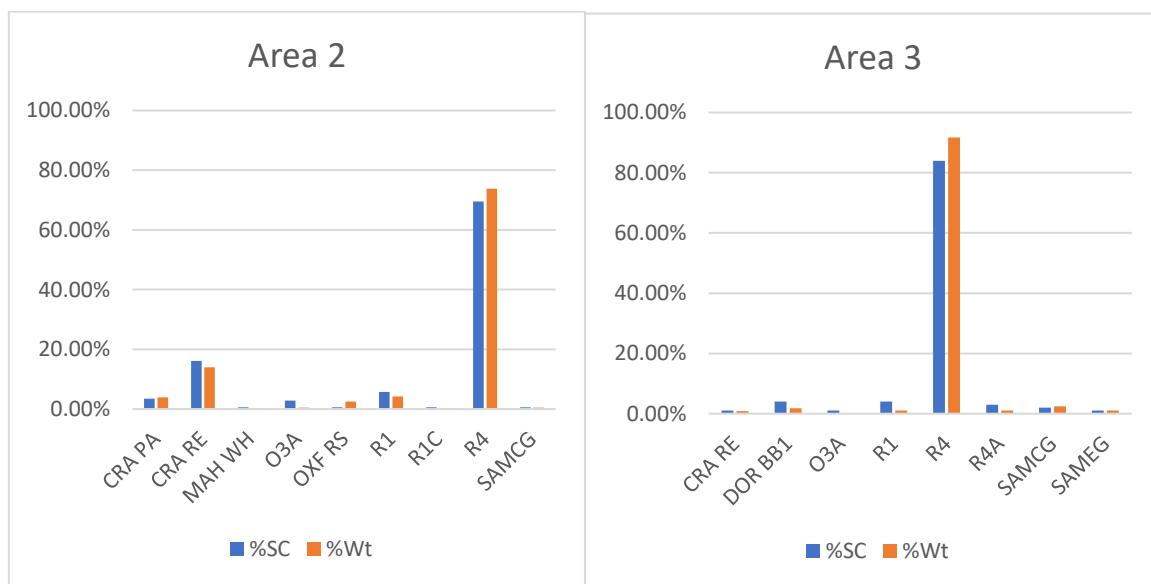


Chart 2 – Composition of the Area 2 and 3 assemblages by percentage of sherd count and weight

Discussion

The 2019 excavation season produced the greatest amount of pottery of all seasons by far and was also better preserved with larger sherds and several joining fragments. This is also reflected to some extent in the recorded mean sherd weights, which for the HFS19 assemblage is 16.11g in comparison to the 12.15 g for the 2017 assemblage, and 11.35 g for the 2018 assemblage. The key area of deposition was Area 2, and to a lesser extent Area 3, with high concentrations of mid-late 4th century pottery.

Overall, the fabrics and forms present in the 2019 excavation assemblage compare well to those of the previous seasons, however the composition is markedly different – see charts 3-5 for comparison of the 2017, 2018, and 2019 pottery. There is a clear dominance of East Yorkshire Calcite-Gritted wares (over 70% of the assemblage) and a greater number of Huntcliff-type jars. There are also two dishes in this fabric, only one example of which had been recovered from the 2012 season (Bidwell and Croom 2014). Although East Yorkshire Calcite-Gritted Wares were well-represented in both the 2017 and 2018 seasons, they never accounted for more than 45% of sherd count (Hudak 2018a and 2018b). The levels of Crambeck products are higher than in the 2018 assemblage, however, they are not as abundant as in the 2017 assemblage. Dales Shelly ware and Dales-type wares are scarce similarly to the 2017 assemblage. While pottery produced at or in the vicinity of Catterick is absent from this assemblage (e.g. CTR WS mortaria – Hudak 2018b), it is still very likely that most of the site's pottery was supplied through Catterick having access to a wide range of goods including those from Oxfordshire and Dorset.

The analysis of the 2019 Roman pottery assemblage reinforces the findings of those of the previous seasons providing a firm mid-late 4th century date with a very small residual component, and the possibility of links to Roman Catterick acting as a supply base. The quantity of pottery recovered further contributes to the ever growing dataset of late Roman rural sites in the North East of England and adds valuable and statistically valid data to the future synthesis of the site by supporting the existing hypotheses and observed depositional patterns on site.

Recommendations

All pottery has been examined and requires no further analysis at this stage of work. A pottery report should be included in any publication of the site. All vessels could be classified with the help of typologies and corpora, which should minimize the need for illustrations.

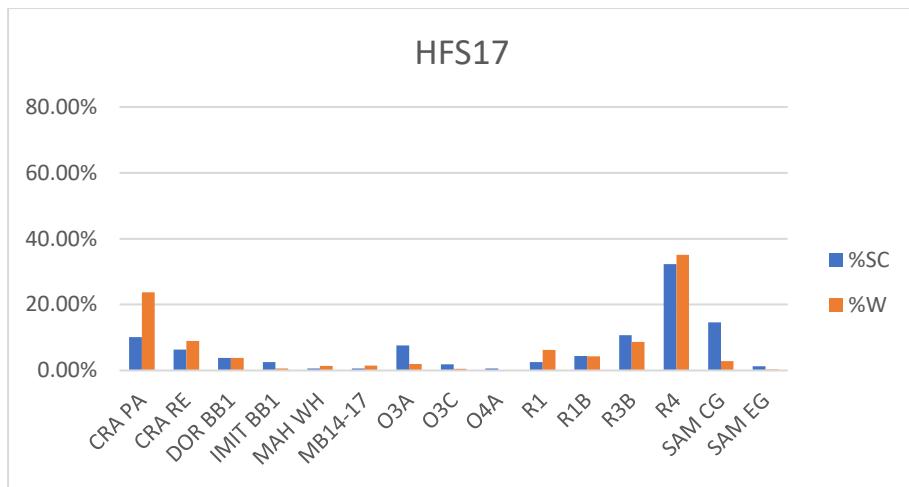


Chart 3 – Composition of the 2017 excavation assemblage by percentage of sherd count and weight

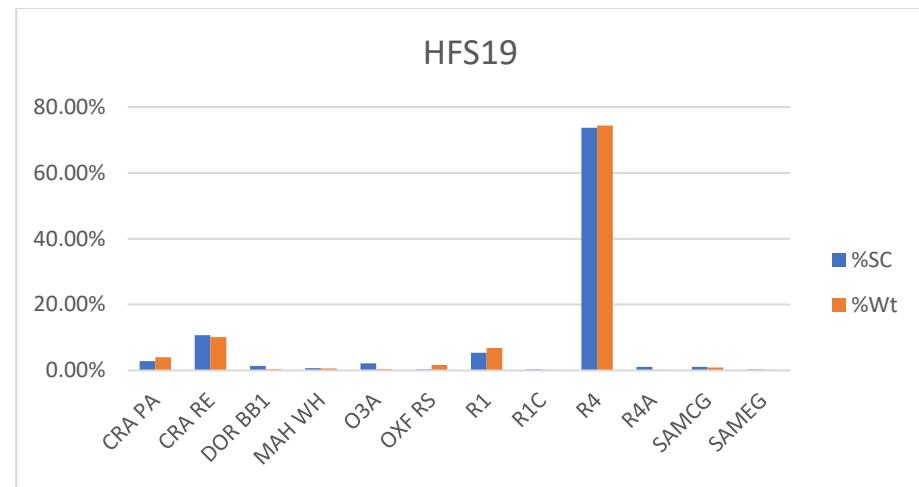


Chart 5 - Composition of the 2019 excavation assemblage by percentage of sherd count and weight

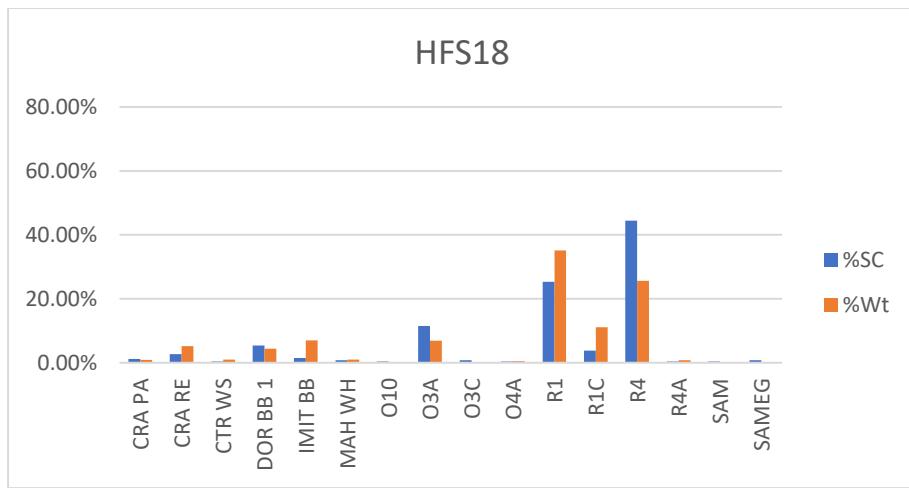


Chart 4 – Composition of the 2018 excavation assemblage by percentage of sherd count and weight

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