

A Post-Excavation Assessment of the Romano-British pottery from The Hagg, Swaledale, North Yorkshire for the Swaledale and Arkengarthdale Archaeology Group

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Introduction

Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. was commissioned by the Swaledale and Arkengarthdale Archaeology Group to carry out the post-excavation assessment of the Romano-British pottery found during the 2016 and 2017 community excavations at The Hagg, Swaledale. The following report presents the results of the identification, quantification, and dating of the above assemblages.

Methodology

All fragments were fully quantified using the standard measures of sherd count, weight, and Estimated Vessel Equivalent (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 database on a 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). Fabrics of unknown source were subjected to further analysis and their fabrics were described in terms of colour, feel, hardness, fracture, and inclusions from fresh breaks (Orton *et al.* 1993); and have been assigned short four-letter descriptive codes. Forms have been recorded with the help of the Catterick type series (Bell and Evans 2002).

Fabrics

Sourced fabrics:

DOR BB1:

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

IMIT BB1:

Imitation Black Burnished Ware – for details see Gerrard (2014)

MAH WH:

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

CRA WH:

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

CRA PA:

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

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)

Catterick fabrics:

The range of sandy grey and oxidised wares, calcite gritted wares, and mortarium fabrics 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, O3C, and O4A: sandy oxidised fabrics – for more details see Bell and Evans 2002: 353

R1, R1B, and R3B: 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). This fabric was the most prolific of the East Yorkshire industries, and is abundant in the 4th century AD (Evans 1985, Bell and Evans 2002).

MB14-17: range of superficially similar mortarium fabrics attributed to the Baines/Catterick area – for details see Hartley 2002: 357

Unsources fabrics:

FINE: unsourced fine grey ware.

A grey fabric with dark grey/black core and lighter grey margins. Surfaces are soapy and highly micaceous. Rather soft fabric, probably affected by soil conditions. Wheelmade.

Assemblage composition and dating

WHF16 assemblage

A total of 29 sherds weighing 0.379kg and representing 0.25 EVEs were found during the 2016 excavation. Sherds were recovered from Trenches C to F, with Trench E yielding the majority of the assemblage (20 sherds). Most fragments were heavily abraded, which may suggest that a degree of redeposition had taken place.

There is a limited range of fabrics represented in this assemblage, including DOR BB1, FINE, oxidised and reduced sandy wares (O3A, O3C, R1B, R3B), and the East Yorkshire Calcite Gritted Ware R4, which is in fact the most commonly occurring fabric suggesting a 4th-century AD date for the assemblage. All other fabrics are represented by 1-3 sherds only.

Diagnostic sherds were scarce, but include rim fragments of at least five different vessels: a vertical-rimmed beaker in FINE (BE4); wall-sided bowl (B6.2) and flange-rim bowl (B15.1) in sandy greywares; plain-rim 'dog dish' in DOR BB1 (D1.1) with intersecting arc decoration; and the late 4th-century Huntcliff-type jar form in R4 (J6.6) dated AD350/55-400+, which further reinforces the late date of the assemblage. Late 4th-century calcite gritted wares are typical of the latest Roman deposits in the north (Bidwell and Croom 2010). Ratios of Crambeck to Huntcliff sherds could refine dating further (*ibid.*), however there are no Crambeck fragments present in this assemblage – probably due to its small size, which would also affect the results of such an exercise and produce meaningless results.

Fabric	SC	W(g)	EVEs
DOR BB1	1	14	0.05
FINE	1	6	0.09
O3A	2	18	
O3C	2	2	
R1B	2	11	0.04
R3B	3	54	0.07
R4	18	274	
TOTAL	29	379	0.25

Table 1 – Quantification of the WHF16 assemblage by sherd count, weight (g), and EVEs per fabric

HFS17 assemblage

The 2017 season yielded a larger assemblage of 158 sherds weighing 1920g and representing 2.43 EVEs. Most of the fragments were unstratified with a small amount from contexts (2), (3), (11), (16), (24), and (26). Again, most sherds were heavily abraded which may suggest a degree of redeposition.

Although there is a greater variety of fabrics present in this assemblage, it is still a rather limited range including only 15 different types. Apart from FINE, all WHF16 fabrics are represented with the addition of imitation BB1, Crambeck fabrics, two additional Catterick sandy fabrics and a mortarium fabric (MB14-17), Mancetter Hartshill fabric, and Terra Sigillata.

Similarly to WHF16, the most common fabric is R4 comprising nearly a third of the assemblage by sherd count and weight; and is only represented by form J6.6, the Huntcliff type jar dated AD350/55-400+. Other 4th-century fabrics are also present in greater quantities, such as the Crambeck Parchment and Reduced wares. They include sherds with red painted decoration, a variety of flanged bowls (CRA RE, B17.8), mortarium forms (CRA PA, M47, M50), and even a rim fragment of a type M61 (Corder type 5b, 1937) dated to AD350/55-400+, which was produced both as bowls or mortaria when gritted. Some of the DOR BB1 forms can also be dated to the late 3rd to the 4th centuries AD: beaded and flanged bowl B17.6, and everted rim jars J13.7 and J13.8. There is also a rim fragment in fabric R1 of the very distinctive Dales-type jar of Gillam form 157 (Loughlin 1977) dated to between AD200 and AD375.

Unlike the WHF16 material, there is also a 2nd- to 3rd-century element in this assemblage. This includes a rim fragment of a Mancetter Hartshill hammerhead mortarium (M98) dated to AD220-300, another even earlier mortarium form M12 in Catterick fabric MB14-17, which is probably a local Bainesse/Catterick product and is dated to AD100-140. Interestingly, there is a quantity of heavily abraded Terra Sigillata fragments; in fact, they form the second most common fabric group in the assemblage by sherd count, but that is possibly due to its fragmented nature rather than signifying the presence of a large Terra Sigillata assemblage. Most of them seem to be of Central Gaulish origin, but two fragments could be from the East Gaulish centres dated to AD150-300. There is also a re-worked fragment of SAM CG: half of a disc-shaped object, which could be either a gaming counter or a loom weight.

Fabric	SC	%SC	W(g)	%W	EVEs	%EVE
CRA PA	16	10.13%	455	23.70%	0.32	13.17%
CRA RE	10	6.33%	173	9.01%	0.37	15.23%
DOR BB1	6	3.80%	74	3.85%	0.26	10.70%
IMIT BB1	4	2.53%	12	0.63%	0.1	4.12%
MAH WH	1	0.63%	26	1.35%	0.06	2.47%
MB14-17	1	0.63%	29	1.51%		0.00%
O3A	12	7.59%	37	1.93%		0.00%
O3C	3	1.90%	9	0.47%	0.08	3.29%
O4A	1	0.63%	1	0.05%		0.00%
R1	4	2.53%	120	6.25%	0.39	16.05%
R1B	7	4.43%	83	4.32%		0.00%
R3B	17	10.76%	167	8.70%	0.22	9.05%
R4	51	32.28%	674	35.10%	0.63	25.93%
SAM CG	23	14.56%	54	2.81%		0.00%
SAM EG	2	1.27%	6	0.31%		0.00%
TOTAL	158	100.00%	1920	100.00%	2.43	100.00%

Table 2 – Quantification of the HFS17 assemblage by sherd count, weight (g), and EVEs per fabric

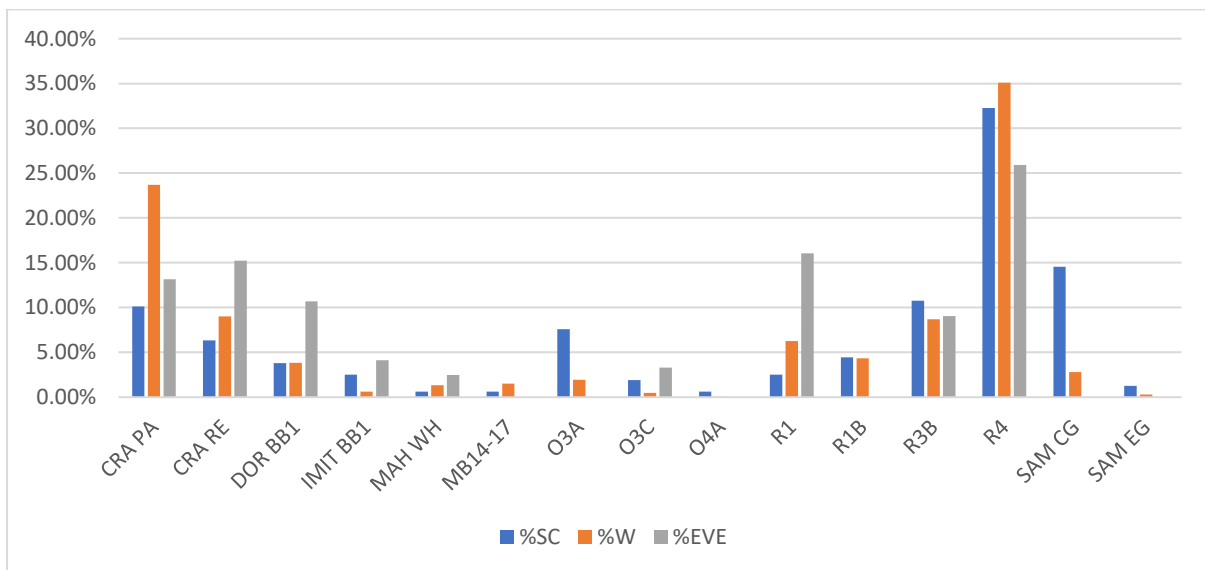


Chart 1 – Quantification of the HSF17 assemblage by sherd count, weight (g), and EVEs per fabric

Discussion

Overall, the two assemblages are very similar in nature, and also compare well to the West Hagg excavation material (Gerrard 2014). There is a strong late 4th-century component in both represented by the Huntcliff type jars and Crambeck Parchment Ware mortaria. The presence of these fabrics is not unusual for the area. For example, the Roman pottery assemblage of the Aiskew Roman villa excavations also produced sherds of these fabrics/forms and some late BB1, despite the assemblage being predominantly 3rd century in date (Gerrard 2017; Hudak 2017). As mentioned above, East Yorkshire Calcite Gritted Ware is typical of the latest deposits in the North (Bidwell and Croom 2010), and Crambeck was the major supplier of mortaria in the 4th century in Northern Britain (Hudak 2013). On the other hand, it is an extremely interesting assemblage as rural sites producing very late 4th-century pottery are uncommon in the North of England (Collins 2012).

Earlier Roman pottery from the HFS17 site might signify earlier occupation, however, the notion of 'heirloom' or retained fragments arriving to the site might be a more likely explanation – and the re-worked Terra Sigillata fragment could also fit into this theory.

The small size and abraded and unstratified nature of the assemblages limits their discussion beyond dating, however, the occurrence of fabrics also present at – and in some cases possibly produced in the area of – Catterick may present evidence of links to the supplies of Catterick and its hinterland.

Recommendations

All pottery has been examined and requires no further analysis, although a Samian specialist might be able to provide a more detailed discussion of the Terra Sigillata assemblage. A pottery report should be included in any publication of the site along with some illustrations.

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