

Post-Excavation Assessment of the Romano-British pottery from the 2021 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 undertake the post-excavation assessment of the Romano-British pottery recovered during the 2021 community excavations of The Hagg, Swaledale (site code HFS21). The following report presents the results of the identification, quantification, and dating of the pottery assemblage.

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 (PCRG, SGRP, MPRG 2016) and standards used by PCA specialists. All data has been recorded in a relational database 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 (ASDU 2014, Gerrard 2014, Hudak 2018a and 2018b, 2019). Forms have been recorded with the help of the Catterick type series (Bell and Evans 2002).

Fabrics

CRA PA:

Crambeck Parchment Ware – for fabric details see Tomber and Dore 1998, forms in Bell and Evans 2002 and Corder 1937

MCTR WS4:

Cantley/Catterick tradition White-Slipped Ware – for details see Leary and Hartley 2017 and Tomber and Dore 1998 (CTR WS, CAN WS, SWN WS)

SAMCG:

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

O3A and O4A: sandy oxidised fabrics – for more details see Bell and Evans 2002: 353

R1 and R1C: sandy reduced fabrics – 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 (HUN CG in Tomber and Dore 1998, and Late Gritty Wares in Gerrard 2014, and CG in Leary 2021). Subgroups of HUN CG based on firing colour and frequency of inclusions were identified in the Cataractonium type series (Leary 2021). Updated dating of forms was available from Bidwell and Croom 2010.

Assemblage composition and dating

The 2021 excavation yielded a small assemblage of Roman pottery totalling 38 fragments weighing 0.581kg and representing 0.71 EVEs. The condition of the assemblage is poor: all sherds show a degree of abrasion, and the mean sherd weight of the assemblage is relatively low at 15.29g implying redeposition. Apart from a low degree of internal wear on the mortaria, no other signs of use-wear or post-firing modifications were noted.

A restricted range of pottery fabrics were identified in the assemblage (Table 1) with a comparable but far less varied composition than the 2018 and 2019 seasons of excavations (cf. Hudak 2018b, 2019). The overall date of the assemblage falls into the 4th century AD with small amounts of broadly dated or residual material.

Fabric	Sherd Count	Weight (g)	EVEs
CRA PA	9	310	0.31
MCTR WS4	1	80	
O3A	1	2	
O4A	5	8	
R1	8	63	
R1C	1	3	0.05
R4	10	110	0.35
SAMCG	3	5	
TOTAL	38	581	0.71

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

Although the assemblage is too small to allow for meaningful analysis of the proportion of different fabrics, Crambeck Parchment ware mortaria (CRA PA forms M47 and M51) and East Yorkshire Calcite Gritted ware Gillam 162 type jars (R4 form J6.3) were identified most frequently. There are fragments of a minimum of five different CRA PA mortaria in the assemblage including sherds joining to a complete profile of a Corder type 6 mortarium from context (148) dated to AD300-400+. R4 – or HUN CG – sherds are derived from a minimum of three different Gillam 162 type jars that lack the internal groove (type J6.3), which are dated to after AD360 (Bidwell and Croom 2010).

Other fabrics from a known source include one base sherd of a slag-gritted Cantley/Catterick tradition white-slipped mortarium (MCTR WS4) dated to between AD230-350 (Leary and Hartley 2017) and three small fragments of Samian ware, most likely of Central Gaulish origin, broadly dated to AD120-260 and thus possibly residual. Unsourced reduced and oxidised sand-tempered wares make up the rest of the assemblage, only one sherd being diagnostic, a rim sherd of a J12.11 type triangular-rim jar (Bell and Evans 2002).

The sum of EVEs is too low for the analysis of the functional composition of the assemblage, but the only form categories present are jars and mortaria.

Contextual analysis

The assemblage was recovered from Areas 4, 6, 7, 8, and 9. The bulk of the pottery was unstratified in Overburdens 1 and 2, and only six fragments were retrieved from individually numbered contexts (Table 2). Based on the date of the Roman pottery a 'context considered date' was established for each context, including the overburdens, to give an overall date for the features, but these are not dependent on their stratigraphic relationships. The area assemblages are detailed below.

Area	Feature	Context	Context		Weight (g)	EVEs
			Context	Considered Date		
A4	OB1	0	AD360-400+	20	228	0.34
A4	OB2	0	AD300-400+	5	205	0.22
A4	Drain?	148	AD270-400+	1	28	
A4	Posthole	154	AD230-350	4	89	
A6	OB1	0	AD40-400+	1	1	
A7	OB2	0	AD360-400+	1	12	0.1
A8	Deposit	145	AD40-400+	1	2	
A9	OB1	0	AD300-400+	5	16	0.05
TOTAL				38	581	0.71

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

Area 4

A total of 30 fragments of Roman pottery weighing 0.550kg were found in Area 4 features, largely in OB1 and OB2. The area assemblage includes all mortaria found on site (CRA PA and MCTR WS4), all the Samian, rims of a minimum of two R4 Huntcliff jars, and small amounts of reduced and oxidised sandy wares. The material from OB1 is dated to after AD360, and from OB2 to after AD300, but it must be noted that these deposits most likely comprise redeposited material.

Only five fragments of the area assemblage were stratified. Fill (148) of a potential drain [147] contained a single fragment of a CRA PA mortarium, which gives a *terminus post quem* of AD270 at the earliest for this deposit. Fill (154) posthole [153] contained four sherds, three small R1 fragments and the MCTR WS4 mortarium base sherd dated to between AD230-350.

Area 6

The overburden in Area 6 produced a single sherd of Roman pottery (1g) in fabric O4A, which cannot be dated any more precisely than the Roman period.

Area 7

Overburden 2 in Area 7 also contained one fragment of Roman pottery (12g), the rim of a Huntcliff type jar in fabric R4. This type is dated to after AD360, but it is likely to be a redeposited sherd in this deposit.

Area 8

A single sherd of pottery weighing 2g was recovered from the accumulated deposit (145) in Area 8, an unsourced O3A fragment, which could not be dated any more closely than to the Roman period.

Area 9

Five sherds of Roman pottery weighing 16g were recovered from OB1 of Area 9. These comprise a tiny fragment of O4A, the J12.11 jar rim fragment in R1, and three East Yorkshire Calcite-gritted ware body sherds. The latter may give a 4th century AD date for the deposit but are likely to have been redeposited.

Discussion

The 2021 excavation season produced a meagre assemblage in comparison to the previous two seasons at The Hagg. While most of the material is abraded and likely to have been redeposited, the

larger mortarium fragments give a higher-than-expected mean sherd weight to the assemblage at 15.29g. For comparison, the mean sherd weight of the 2019 assemblage was 16.11g, of the 2018 assemblage 11.35g, and 12.15 g for the 2017 assemblage.

The range of fabrics present in the 2021 assemblage is comparable to the assemblages of the previous seasons, however, detailed analysis of fabric proportions is not possible due to the small size of the assemblage. Nevertheless, the 2021 assemblage further reinforces the results of the preceding seasons: the predominantly 4th century AD date for activity with limited earlier residual material and the possibility of links to Catterick. The assemblage is significant for the site itself as well as adding to the growing dataset of late Roman rural sites in the North East of England.

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 were classified with the help of typologies and corpora, which should minimize the need for illustrations.

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