

Digging Deeper

A Community Archaeology Project at Under Whittle, Sheen



(UWDD21) Medieval and Post-Medieval Ceramics from Under Whittle, Staffordshire

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 In late summer 2021, archaeological excavations were carried out at Under Whittle Farm, located in the Dove Valley between the villages of Sheen and Longnor, Staffordshire. The investigations were part of the *Digging Deeper* community project, which aimed to build upon the results of an earlier initiative, *Peeling Back the Layers*, undertaken in 2016. Specifically, the *Digging Deeper* project targeted a suspected medieval house platform at the site, within which two small trenches had been opened during the 2016 season, producing interesting, but ultimately inconclusive results.

1.2 The *Digging Deeper* project involved the excavation of a single trench through the platform, supplemented by several small test pits, all within the vicinity of the 2016 season's Trench 3. The excavations yielded a total of 559 ceramic vessel sherds (5,832g) from 19 contexts/ test-pits (001, 002, 004, 005, 014, 016, 017/ 022, 020, 021, 022, 023, 048, and Test Pits 2, 3, 5, 23, 24, 26 and 28), an unstratified group, and a handful of fragments for which no context was recorded.

2.0 Assessment methodology

2.1 Prior to the assessment, the ceramics were washed, bagged and sorted by finds number. During the assessment, all pottery fragments were examined macroscopically or using a x40 hand lens and organised into fabric and/ or ware/ decorative types, and vessel form. Quantification was by sherd count and weight. A minimum vessel count (MVC) was also conducted for the overall assemblage, rather than on a context-by-context basis. This decision was made due to the presence of confirmed cross-context joins within the assemblage, and the likelihood that further examples remain undiscovered (see below **3.3**). The relatively narrow range of fabric/ ware and decorative types, and forms also suggests that the 2021 sherds stem from a limited number of vessels. In addition, the distribution of ceramics within

the assemblage is significantly weighted towards just three contexts, namely (001) (75 sherds), (004) (370 sherds) and Test Pit 5 (44 sherds). The remaining 16 contexts from which pottery was recovered each generated no more than 15 sherds, with eight producing only a single fragment. Undertaking an MVC for such groups would not produce a meaningful result. The overall MVC was based principally on the presence of rims, but also components such as bases and handles where no other part of the vessel was represented within the assemblage. Body sherds were used conservatively within the vessel count and considered only where the form, fabric/ ware or decorative technique could not be identified elsewhere. The vessel count was not applied to undiagnostic fabric/ ware types and/ or forms. Utilising this methodology, a minimum of 73 vessels was identified within the assemblage (see Appendix 2). A full catalogue of the pottery sherds is presented in Appendix 4).

3.0 Summary of the assemblage

3.1 Of the 559 sherds found at Under Whittle, 370 (c.66%) come from context (004), with (001) contributing 75 sherds (c.13%) and Test Pit 5 44 sherds (c.8%). None of the remaining 16 contexts/ test pits, the unstratified group or the sherds that are not marked with a context number, generated more than 15 sherds (c.3%).

3.2 Within the assemblage as a whole, 108 sherds (c.19%) are no more than 1g in weight, with a total of 198 (c.35%) weighing 5g or less. Although the frequency of small sherds hindered the determination of vessel forms and, to a lesser degree ware/ fabric and decorative types, it may conversely have inflated the overall minimum vessel count (MVC) for the assemblage. Abrasion was evident on a relatively small number of sherds (including most of those of medieval date), but as most of the fabrics within the assemblage were highly fired and hard or very hard (e.g. Midlands Purple wares, coarse earthenwares and refined creamwares, pearlwares, whitewares etc.) and less prone to wear, the low number of abraded fragments may not be significant.

3.3 Examples of conjoining sherds were identified within context groups (004) and, to a lesser degree, (020). Cross-context joins were recorded between (004) #243 and (014) #401, and (004) #337 and (005) #448. It is probable, however, that additional examples feature within the assemblage.

3.4 In broad terms, the assemblage is characterised by red-, purple- and buff-bodied coarsewares of the late 15th to 19th centuries. Utilitarian Midlands Purple wares, slip-coated wares and coarse earthenwares are very well represented, although examples of more refined Cistercian wares, blackwares, yellow wares, mottled wares and slip wares also fall within this general category. It should be noted that the Midlands Purple and coarse earthenware sherds typically relate to large vessels (such as jars, cisterns and, in the case of the coarse earthenwares, wide-mouthed, slope-sided pancheons) that, due to their size, naturally have a greater potential than smaller forms to be represented by multiple sherds. This factor does not, however, account entirely for the prevalence of coarsewares within the assemblage. Refined pale- or white-bodied tea and table wares belonging to the c.mid-18th to the late 19th centuries (including one or more examples of white salt-glazed stoneware, creamware, pearlware, whiteware and refined yellow ware), appear in smaller quantities. A handful of medieval sherds (of c.11th- to 14th-/ 15th-century date), representing at least five fabric types also feature.

4.0 Description of the ceramic finds

4.1 A discussion of the ceramics by context/ test pit etc. is provided below. As indicated a full catalogue of the ceramics is provided in Appendix 4. A quantification of ware types is presented in Appendix 1. Individual context breakdowns of the ceramics by sherd count is presented in Appendix 3. Table 1 offers a summary of broad date ranges for all ceramic groups from the 2021 season.

Table 1: Broad date ranges for ceramic groups from Under White

Context No.	Context Description	No. Sherds	Broad Date Range	Notes
001	Layer: dark brown sandy loam topsoil	77	IC15-C19	Concentration of sherds of c.C17-C19 date, due largely to high percentage of coarse earthenwares.
002	Layer: mid-brown sandy clay	2	IC15-C19	
004	Layer: mid-brown sandy loam	370	C13-C19	Two medieval sherds; concentration of c.C17-C19 sherds, due to high percentage of CEWs.
005	Layer: mid- to light brown silty loam on N edge of trench	1	C17-mC18	
014	Layer: mid-brown silty loam	7	IC15-C18	
016	Layer: mid-brown silty loam	2	IC15-C16	
017/ 022	Interface between layers of mid-brown silty loam and mid-brown sticky clay?	1	C17-C19	
020	Layer: mid-brown firm, compacted clay	15	C13-C18	
021	Layer: charcoal	13	IC15-C16	Midlands Purple wares, one of which may have been used as a saggar in Cistercian ware production.
022	Layer: mid-brown sticky clay	5	IC15-C16	
023	2016 backfill	1	cC11-eC15	Medieval fabric, comparable to iron-rich sandy wares from Staffordshire and sandy textured Brackenfield wares.
048	Layer: mid-brown clay	1	medieval	Unattributed medieval fabric.
Test Pit 2		1	m-IC19	
Test Pit 3		2	m-IC19	
Test Pit 5		44	IC17 –C19	
Test Pit 23		1	C18-C19	
Test Pit 24		5	IC15-mC19 (c.1830s)	
Test Pit 26		1	IC15-C16	
Test Pit 28		1	IC15-C16	
U/S		7	C17 - IC19	
None recorded		2	Medieval (C15?)-C19	
	Total	559		

Context 001 – 77 sherds, 458g, MVC 11 (Appendix 3: A).

The overall date range for the (001) material is wide, spanning the late 15th to the late 19th centuries. Five dense Midlands Purple ware fragments, which include a rounded jar with an upright, externally flanged rim (#005), represent the earliest material within the group, potentially dating to the late 15th or 16th century (Plates 1 & 2). Although some sources (e.g. Coppack 1972, 75) suggest an earlier origin for this ware, its appearance in potting centres such as north Staffordshire is likely to have occurred in the later 15th century (Ford 1995, 36). Here and in other potteries, including Ticknall, south Derbyshire (Spavold 2005, 163), production of this type persisted into the 18th century in the form of butter pots.

The later 17th and early/ mid-18th century is represented by slipware/ yellow ware, blackware and mottled ware sherds. A single slip-coated ware bowl sherd (#283) belongs to the 18th century and features an unusual oval scar on the vessel exterior, which has been over-glazed. Coarse earthenware fragments, the diagnostic examples of which represent pancheons, constitute 37% of the total sherd count for (001). Examples typically have a hard-fired orange fabric, with a dark brown or black iron-rich lead glaze on the vessel interior. Some, such as #025, #026 and #034, feature an iron-rich slip coat beneath the glaze. Coarse earthenwares were produced in a standard range of utilitarian forms in many potting centres, including small-scale country potteries, from the 17th until the mid-20th century (Brears 1971; McGarva 2000, 12). Ascribing a precise date to these wares is, therefore, somewhat difficult, although it has been suggested that 17th- to 18th-century examples from north Staffordshire at least, may include fine streaks of pale clay within the orange or red fabric (Ford & Barker 1999). Within the (001) material, seven sherds display this characteristic: #013, #034, #038, #270, #280 (two sherds) and #284.

Three small undecorated creamware fragments (#023, #031 and #044) date to the late 18th or early 19th century. A single pearlware saucer sherd (#024) is potentially of a similar date, as its under-glaze painted decoration can be tentatively identified as an Oriental scene popular during the period c.1775-1810 (Goodby 1999). Other

pearlwares from (001) belong to the first quarter of the 19th century, and comprise an under-glaze painted saucer and tea bowl (#060 and #451 respectively), and a transfer-printed tea bowl (#266) and hollow ware (#267). Examples of mid- to late 19th-century whitewares include three sherds (#024, #041 and #400) that relate to a single plate decorated under glaze with a blue 'Asiatic Pheasants' print, a popular design introduced by the Stoke-on-Trent pottery firm of Podmore, Walker & Co. in c.1850 (Goodwin & Baker 2009, 20). A stoneware preserve jar sherd (#334), a probable refined yellow ware fragment (#345) and most of the eight examples of brown (Derbyshire?) stoneware (#019, #021, #286, #345, #348 and #360) that feature in (001) can also be placed in the second half of the 19th century.

Context 002 – 2 sherds, 32g, MVC 1 (Appendix 3: B)

The context produced a single hollow-ware body sherd of a Cistercian ware, produced between the late 15th and early 17th century. A probable coarse earthenware pancheon sherd of 18th- or 19th-century date also features.

Context 004 – 370 sherds, 3,869g, MVC 49 (Appendix 3: C)

Two abraded sherds of a medieval buff/ cream sandy fabric with splashes of a brownish yellow or green lead glaze (MF2) were recovered from (004) (#316 and #357) (Plates 3 & 4). The sherds represent a hollow ware (jug?) (#316) and a bowl (#357). The fabric has similarities with Coal Measures Whitewares produced in north Derbyshire and South Yorkshire in the c.13th and 14th centuries (Cumberpatch 2004a), and with Midlands white wares of the same date that are known throughout Staffordshire, particularly the southern and central parts of the county, and other areas of the West Midlands (Ford 1995, 33-35).

Otherwise, the (004) material displays a similar composition and overall date range to (001). Midlands Purple wares are well-represented with a total of 52 sherds (14% of the total sherd count for the context), some of which (such as #355, #356, #378 and #380) are of a somewhat softer-fired, although still diagnostic fabric than the

more typical examples. Forms include at least three jars (#055, #355 and #378), a cistern (#406) (Plates 5 & 6) and a cistern or large jar (#224), a bowl with everted and pinched rim (#344) (Plates 7 & 8), and a chafing dish with knife-trimmed pedestal base (#393). This latter vessel has a comparable base treatment to an example excavated at Chapel Lane, Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent (Ford 1995, 55; Fig. 20 no. 162). A finely potted, small Cistercian ware cup is represented by two conjoining sherds, the exterior surfaces of which bear traces of applied white clay decorative strips (#164) (Plates 9 & 10). A general date-range of the late 15th to the early 17th centuries is typically presented for the production of Cistercian wares, although an earlier origin (c.1450s) has been suggested (Ford 1995, 37). Cumberpatch (2003a, 10) suggests that the use of applied white clay decoration on Cistercian wares may have ceased during the 16th century. The quality of the example from (004) could, however, indicate a slightly later date, perhaps during the c.mid-16th to early 17th centuries and the transition from the production of Cistercian wares to typically finer blackwares (Barker 1986, 58).

Just two diagnostic sherds of 17th-century yellow ware feature in (004), representing a hollow ware and a dish (#100 and #216 respectively). The context includes six sherds of an orange fabric representative of at least three thrown dishes with (where surviving) everted rims, the interiors of which are decorated with trailed slip. Decoration takes the form of simple lines of cream slip applied directly to the pottery body (as demonstrated by #066/ #068 and #145) (Plate 11) or dark and light brown slip trailed over a cream slip ground (#385/ #396/ #399) (Plate 12). A late 17th- or early 18th-century date (c.1670-1710) is likely for these sherds (Barker 1999). Of potentially similar date is a red-bodied cup or mug rim sherd with lines and dots of cream slip trailed onto the vessel exterior (#219). Other slipware forms, potentially of early 18th-century date, include two press-moulded dishes in either buff (#250) or orange (#091/ #247) fabrics, decorated internally with white and brown or black joggled slips (Plate 13). A buff-bodied hollow-ware form (#080) has similar decoration. Otherwise, the later 17th- to-mid-/ late 18th-century coarsewares from (004) are a mix of unremarkable blackwares, mottled wares and slip-coated wares. At least some of the numerous coarse earthenware sherds (the overwhelming

majority of which are pancheons, with single instances of a bowl-like form - #337 – and a jar -#450) recovered from the context are also likely to date to this period.

Context (004) generated the sole white salt-glazed stoneware sherd to be found during the 2021 excavations (#195), although little can be said of this example other than it represents a hollow-ware form of probable mid- to late 18th-century date. Creamwares appear in a very limited range of undecorated tea (a saucer - #159) and tableware (a flatware - #081, bowl - #190 and plate - #213) forms of late 18th- or (perhaps more likely) early 19th-century date. Pearlwares are few in number and typically feature under-glaze painted decoration. Two conjoining saucer sherds (#182 and #183) have a polychrome floral design rendered in muted ‘earth’ colours common to the period c.1790-1830 (Goodby 1999) (Plate 14). Five sherds (#059) constitute a single plate with moulded shell-edged decoration, picked out under-glaze in blue. The evenly scalloped and well-embossed moulding of the rim can be placed stylistically between c.1800 and the 1840s (Miller & Hunter 1990, 115). One pearlware sherd of undiagnostic form features blue under-glaze transfer-printed decoration (#243). Whitewares from (004) belong to the mid- to late 19th century and are predominantly tablewares decorated with printed designs in blue, most frequently ‘Asiatic Pheasants’ (#048, #099/ #125, #119, #131/ #153, #138, #202, #237 and #240), with one instance of ‘Willow’ pattern (#166). A single whiteware (carinated?) bowl sherd is decorated within simple horizontal slip banding (#116).

Context 005 – 1 sherd, 18g, MVC 0 (Appendix 3: D)

A single sherd of a coarse earthenware pancheon, the interior of which has a mid-brown lead glaze (#448) (Plate 15). The underside of the vessel features clear transverse ridges or ‘flutes’, possibly indicative of the use of a twisted multi-strand wire to remove the pot from the wheel (Plate 16). Brears (1974, 37-38) notes that this technique is somewhat uncommon and tends only to appear on vessels of mid-18th-century or earlier date. The sherd conjoins with #337 from (004), which also bears the same wire marks.

Context 014 – 2 sherds, 34g, MVC 0 (Appendix 3: E)

An 18th-century slip-coated ware bowl sherd (#401), which conjoins with example #243 from (004). A Midlands Purple ware jar(?) body sherd (#402), of possible late 15th or 16th-century date also features.

Context 016 – 2 sherds, 40g, MVC 0 (Appendix 3: F)

Two Midlands Purple sherds, one of which (#404) represents a large jar or cistern of possible late 15th- or 16th-century date. The other fragment (#405) stems from a hollow ware, such as a jar, probably of similar date.

Context 017/ 022 – 1 sherd, 12g, MVC 0 (Appendix 3: G)

A single fragment of a hard, unglazed orange fabric, probably a coarse earthenware hollow ware of 17th- to 19th-century date.

Context 020 – 15 sherds, 68g, MVC 1 (Appendix 3: H)

The context includes an abraded sherd of a cream/ buff fabric (MF3) (#419) (Plates 17 & 18), comparable with the probable 13th- to 14th-century fragments (MF2) from (004) (#316 and #357). The MF3 sherd probably represents a bowl, with a thin, streaky greenish-yellow lead glaze on the vessel interior. Otherwise, the group comprises a (late?) 17th-century slipware or yellow ware hollow ware, and 13 coarse earthenware fragments, the majority of which stem from pancheons of possible 17th- to 18th-century date.

Context 021 – 13 sherds, 686g, MVC 2 (Appendix 3: I)

Thirteen sherds of Midlands Purple ware, which include at least one large jar or cistern (#429) and a smaller jar (#425/ #430/ #431) of probable late 15th- or 16th-century date. The latter jar sherds are of the same slightly lower-fired fabric as that

observed in (004) #355, #356, #378 and #380. One cistern or jar base sherd (#426) has a fused sherd and firing scar on its underside (Plates 19 & 20), potentially indicative of its use as a rudimentary sagger in the production of Cistercian ware (Ford 1995, 14).

Context 022 – 5 sherds, 110g, MVC 0 (Appendix 3: J)

Five Midlands Purple ware jar and/ or cistern sherds of probable late 15th- to 16th-century date. Two conjoining sherds (#415) share the same lower-fired fabric as #425, #430 and #431 from context (021), and may form part of the same vessel.

Context 023 – 1 sherd, 42g, MVC 1 (Appendix 3: K)

One bowl(?) base sherd of a moderately hard, abraded sandy fabric with sparse quartz and iron-ore inclusions (#413) (Plates 21 & 22). Oxidised to an orange/ fawn colour on the vessel exterior, with a reduced grey core and interior surface, which features streaks of olive-green lead glaze (MF1). The fabric has similarities with 11th- to 14th-century iron-rich sandy wares from Staffordshire (chiefly the southern and central parts of the county) and the West Midlands (Ford 1995, 32-33). It may also compare with sandy textured oxidised and reduced wares produced in Brackenfield, north-east Derbyshire, during the c.14th and early 15th centuries (Cumberpatch 2003b, 6 & 22). Brackenfield products were well-represented within a small medieval assemblage recovered from Staden, near Buxton, c.9km to the north west of Under Whitle (Cumberpatch 2004b, 99).

Context 048 – 1 sherd, 8g, MVC 1 (Appendix 3: L)

A single abraded sherd of an unattributed medieval fabric (MF4) (#455) (Plates 23 & 24). A very soft, unglazed, sandy fabric, oxidised orange on the outside of the vessel, with a reduced pale grey core and interior surface. Fine, rounded and sub-rounded quartz inclusions are very common within the fabric, supplemented by rare, sub-rounded coarse quartz grains.

Test Pit 2 – 1 sherd, 8g, MVC 0 (Appendix 3: M)

A single, mid- to late 19th-century whiteware plate sherd, decorated under-glaze with a blue 'Asiatic Pheasants' print (#328).

Test Pit 3 – 2 sherds, 11g, MVC 2 (Appendix 3: N)

The context produced a fragment of a late 19th-century stoneware preserve jar, with vertical reeding on the vessel exterior (#329) and a mid- to late 19th-century whiteware hollow ware, the outside of which features a pink under-glaze painted horizontal band (#331).

Test Pit 5 – 44 sherds, 124g, MVC 1 (Appendix 3: O)

Ninety-six percent (42) of the sherds from Test Pit 5 relate to a single blackware or fine coarse earthenware hollow ware of late 17th- to 19th-century date (#457). The context group is completed by an early 19th-century under-glaze painted pearlware tea bowl, which probably belongs to the same vessel recorded as #444 from Test Pit 24 (see below), and a small under-glaze transfer-printed pearlware or whiteware fragment of undiagnostic form (#457).

Test Pit 23 – 1 sherd, 6g, MVC 0 (Appendix 3: P)

A probable coarse earthenware hollow ware sherd (#446) of 18th- to 19th-century date.

Test Pit 24 – 5 sherds, 19g, MVC 0 (Appendix 3: Q)

The group comprises a probable Midlands Purple ware jar sherd of the late 15th to 16th centuries (#445), a coarse earthenware pancheon fragment of 17th- to 18th-century date (#443), and three pieces of an under-glaze painted pearlware tea bowl

with a floral design rendered in the muted 'earth' colours typical of the period c.1790-1830s (#444).

Test Pit 26 – 1 sherd, 162g, MVC 0 (Appendix 3: R)

A Midlands Purple ware cistern or large jar body sherd (#442) of late 15th- to 16th-century date.

Test Pit 28 – 1 sherd, 64g, MVC 1 (Appendix 3: S)

A Midlands Purple ware cistern or large jar rim sherd (#441) of late 15th- to 16th-century date. The everted rim is slightly warped.

Unstratified – 7 sherds, 50g, MVC 2 (Appendix 3: T)

Of note within this small group of unstratified material is a coarse earthenware pancheon rim (#456), possibly of 17th- or 18th-century date and a mid- to late 19th-century whiteware saucer base, printed under-glaze with 'Two Temples' pattern (#411).

No Context Recorded – 2 sherds, 11g, MVC 1 (Appendix 3: U)

Two sherds appear without an associated context number, one of which (#343) is a very hard, oxidised fabric with common, well-sorted, fine to medium rounded and sub-rounded quartz inclusions (MF5). The sherd represents a possible bowl, glazed internally with a yellowish-brown lead glaze, some of which appears to have flaked away from the vessel surface. The attribution of this fabric remains uncertain, but can be tentatively compared to Late medieval orange ware, which is essentially a less highly fired version of Midlands Purple ware (Ford 1995, 35). The other fragment without a context number is a soft unglazed coarse earthenware hollow ware of 18th- or 19th-century date (#412).

5.0 Discussion

5.1 The *Digging Deeper* ceramic assemblage compares well with that recovered from Trench 3 during the 2016 excavations (see Table 2). Both demonstrate a fairly limited range of fabric/ ware types, with a predominance of coarse wares, notably utilitarian coarse earthenwares, which constitute 50.7% (by sherd count) of the 2016 Trench 3 assemblage and 29.5% of the 2021 material. Midlands Purple wares appear in both assemblages, but are better represented amongst the 2021 finds (constituting 15.6% of the total sherd count, as opposed to 5.5% from 2016). The Trench 3 Midlands Purple wares included examples of butter pots of probable 17th- to early 18th-century date (Goodwin 2017, 5-6). Such vessels are not obvious amongst the 2021 examples, which, where a specific form can be determined, principally represent small and large jars and cisterns, with at least one bowl and a chafing dish. Although the presence of butter pots cannot be ruled out, particularly as the 2021 material includes a large number of hollow-ware body sherds that are of limited value in ascertaining a precise vessel type, the range of discernible forms compares with that recorded within a 16th-century Midlands Purple ware assemblage from Burslem Market Place, Stoke-on-Trent (Boothroyd & Courtney 2007). As such, the 2021 Midlands Purple wares (and, in all likelihood, at least some of the 2016 examples) are probably of 16th- and possibly even late 15th-century date. The handful of Cistercian wares that appear in the 2021 assemblage are likely to be of similar date; a Midlands Purple fragment from #426 appears to stem from a large jar or cistern used as an elementary saggur in contemporaneous Cistercian ware production.

Table 2: Compositional comparison between the 2016 Trench 3 and 2021 ceramic assemblages.

2016 - Trench 3		2021	
Fabric/ ware type	% of total sherd count	Fabric/ ware type	% of total sherd count
Iron-poor ware?	0.3	Medieval Fabrics 1-5	1.1
Late medieval orange ware	0.3	Cistercian ware	0.5

2016 - Trench 3		2021	
Midlands Purple ware	5.5	Midlands Purple ware	15.6
		Cistercian ware/ Blackware	0.2
Blackware	5.2	Blackware	4.5
Yellow ware	2.7	Yellow ware	0.4
Slipware	0.8	Slipware	2.7
		Slipware/ Yellow ware	0.9
		Slipware?	0.9
Mottled ware	0.8	Mottled ware	2.7
Coarse earthenware/ Mottled ware?	0.6		
Slip-coated ware	3.3	Slip-coated ware	6.6
Coarse earthenware	50.7	Coarse earthenware	29.5
		Coarse earthenware?	2.7
Coarse earthenware/ Midlands Purple ware?	0.8	Coarse earthenware/ Midlands Purple ware	1.4
		Coarse earthenware/ Blackware	7.9
Brown salt-glazed stoneware	0.3	White salt-glazed stoneware	0.2
Creamware	6.6	Creamware	6.1
Pearlware - decorated	3.6	Pearlware - decorated	4.4
Pearlware – undecorated	1.9		
Pearlware/ whiteware? - decorated	0.3	Pearlware/ Whiteware - decorated	0.7
Pearlware/ whiteware? - undecorated	0.8	Pearlware/ Whiteware - undecorated	0.7
Whiteware - decorated	9.9	Whiteware - decorated	3.3
Whiteware - undecorated	0.6	Whiteware - undecorated	1.4
		Refined Yellow ware	0.2
		Refined Yellow ware?	0.2
Stoneware	1.7	Stoneware	0.4
Brown stoneware	3.3	Brown Stoneware	4.8
Total	100	Total	100

5.2 Six medieval sherds feature in the 2021 assemblage, representing at least five fabrics. All are characterised by quartz inclusions of varying frequency, size and

shape, but two, MF2 and MF3, are iron-poor, with cream/ buff fabrics similar to c.13th- to 14th-century wares from Staffordshire and Derbyshire. Fabrics MF2 and MF3 may well compare with the sherd described as an iron-poor ware recovered from Trench 3 (224) during the 2016 investigations (Goodwin 2017, 6). Fabric MF1 is somewhat comparable with c.11th- to 14th-century iron-rich sandy wares from Staffordshire and the West Midlands, although, again, could be a north-east Derbyshire product of the c.14th or 15th century. The identity and provenance of the remaining iron-rich fabrics, MF 4 and MF5, remain uncertain, although the latter may represent a less highly fired Midlands Purple ware of the type categorised by Ford (1995, 35) as a Late medieval orange ware. It should be emphasised, however, that this attribution is tentative. A potential example of Late medieval orange ware was found in Trench 3 (230) in 2016, but, again, this identification remains somewhat uncertain.

5.3 Refined fabrics of the 18th and 19th centuries, such as white salt-glazed stonewares, creamwares, pearlwares and whitewares, form a smaller component of both the 2016 Trench 3 and 2021 assemblages (23.7% of the total sherd count of the former and 17.4% of the latter), but, again, the two groups are comparable in the range of ware and decorative types present. Indeed, it is possible that at least some of the material has a common source on site, as is suggested by the prevalence of flatwares decorated with 'Asiatic Pheasants' design amongst the limited number of printed whitewares from both assemblages.

5.4 The nature of the 2021 assemblage reinforces the observations made following the assessment of ceramics recovered in 2016 (Goodwin 2017, 10-11). The assemblage provides further evidence of medieval activity within or near to the excavation area, but remains inconclusive regarding its precise nature and context. Otherwise, the material provides good evidence of the continued occupation of the site until the second half of the 19th century. Throughout this period the inhabitants of the site utilised a standard range of ceramics sourced from local and regional potting centres, of which Ticknall and Stoke-on-Trent remain the most obvious candidates. Whether the prevalence of coarsewares within the assemblage is indicative of the

historical functional organisation of the site, with activities such as dairying and food storage taking place within or close to the excavation area, remains open to question. The uncertainty expressed following the 2016 assessment, that the ceramics from Trench 3 (and possibly 2) might represent redeposited material (Goodwin 2017, 10) persists into the 2021 assemblage, especially in relation to the larger, quite mixed groups from contexts (001) and (004).

6.0 Conclusions

6.1 The pottery assemblage from the 2021 excavations has shed further light on the duration of occupation at Under Whittle and ceramic consumption traits exhibited by its inhabitants. Questions remain, however, relating to the provenance of the small number of medieval sherds and, more generally, whether the bulk of the material recovered from the excavation area in 2016 and 2021 stems from a common, as yet unidentified primary source on site. This latter question could be investigated further via a more detailed comparison between the 2016 Trench 3 (and possibly Trench 2) and 2021 assemblages, with a view to determining the presence of single vessel forms across the groups. Further work on the medieval wares, potentially including petrological and chemical analysis, would be of value in establishing a more conclusive point of origin for the sherds and tightening the suggested date ranges. Until a decision regarding the possibility for further analysis has been reached, the 2021 assemblage should be retained in full.

7.0 Acknowledgements

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8.0 References

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PLATE 1: Midlands Purple ware rim sherd #005 (vessel exterior).



PLATE 2: Midlands Purple ware rim sherd #005 (vessel interior).



PLATE 3: Buff/ cream sandy fabric (MF2) body sherd #357 (vessel exterior).



PLATE 4: Buff/ cream sandy fabric (MF2) body sherd #357 (vessel interior).



PLATE 5: Midlands Purple ware cistern base sherd #406 (vessel interior).



PLATE 6: Midlands Purple ware cistern base sherd #406 (vessel exterior). Note remains of spigot hole.



PLATE 7: Midlands Purple ware bowl rim sherd #344 (vessel exterior). Note the pinched rim (towards the bottom of the image).



PLATE 8: Midlands Purple ware bowl rim sherd #344 (vessel interior).

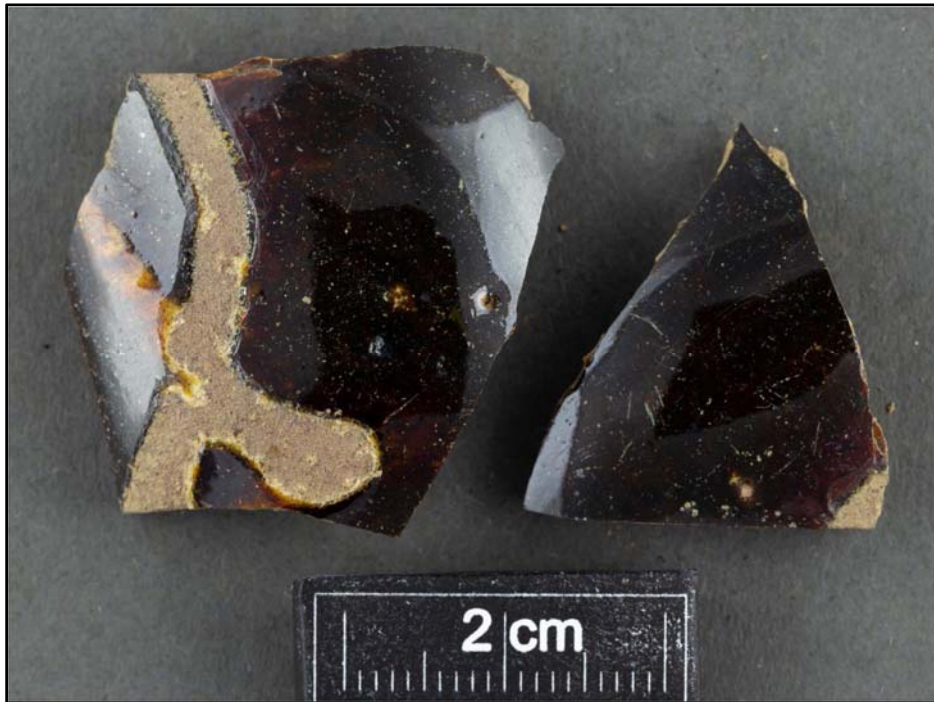


PLATE 9: Conjoining Cistercian ware cup sherds #164 (vessel exterior). Traces of applied white clay decorative strips can be seen on the vessel surface.



PLATE 10: Conjoining Cistercian ware cup sherds #164 (vessel interior). Traces of applied white clay decorative strips can be seen on the vessel surface.



PLATE 11: Conjoining slip-decorated dish rim sherds #145 (vessel interior). The cream slip has been trailed directly over the vessel interior prior to glazing.



PLATE 12: Slip-decorated dish body sherd #399 (vessel interior). The dark and light brown slip has been trailed over a white slip ground applied to the vessel interior prior to glazing.



PLATE 13: Dish body sherds #247 decorated with 'joggled' cream/ white and brown slips (vessel interior).



PLATE 14: Pearlware saucer body sherd #183 with underglaze painted decoration (vessel interior).



PLATE 15: Coarse earthenware pancheon body sherd #448 (vessel interior).



PLATE 16: Coarse earthenware pancheon body sherd #448 (vessel exterior). Note transverse ridges or 'flutes' on base.



PLATE 17: Cream/ buff fabric (MF3) body sherd #419 (vessel interior).



PLATE 18: Cream/ buff fabric (MF3) body sherd #419 (vessel exterior).



PLATE 19: Midlands Purple ware cistern or jar base sherd #426 (vessel exterior). Note fused sherd on underside of vessel (left side of image).



PLATE 20: Midlands Purple ware cistern or jar base sherd #426 (vessel interior). Note fused sherd on underside of vessel (right side of image).



PLATE 21: Sandy fabric (MF1) bowl(?) base sherd #413 with green glaze on vessel interior.



PLATE 22: Sandy fabric (MF1) bowl(?) base sherd #413 (vessel exterior).



PLATE 23: Abraded soft sandy fabric (MF4) sherd #455 (vessel interior).



PLATE 24: Abraded soft sandy fabric (MF4) sherd #455 (vessel exterior).