# FARMERS' TRADE AND MARKETS

## SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INTERACTION IN THE MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN EUROPEAN COUNTRYSIDE

edited by MARIE ØDEGAARD, KJETIL LOFTSGARDEN & CLAUDIA THEUNE

RURALIA XV

We dedicate this volume to the memory of

Frode Iversen (1967-2022),

National Representative of Norway to the Ruralia association

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# Contents

# ‘This little potter went to market’

## The use of ceramic evidence to study the socioeconomic landscapes of rural markets in medieval Yorkshire (England)

*Yannick Signer**

**Abstract**

Previous studies of England’s medieval markets have rarely combined the available documentary evidence with archaeological material. This study takes such a combined approach and, based on data from Yorkshire, investigates the role of markets in the distribution of ceramic vessels. The importance of carefully considering distribution patterns is demonstrated through this analysis of medieval pottery production and consumption in the Vale of Pickering. Here, the impact of emerging rural markets during the 12th and 13th centuries is considered in more detail and evidence of potters’ catering specifically to the needs of the rural population is presented.

**Keywords:** *Pottery production, pottery distribution, rural markets, cooking pots.*

**Résumé**

*« Ce petit potier allait au marché » : une étude des paysages socio-économiques des marchés ruraux du Yorkshire médiéval (Angleterre) en utilisant des preuves céramiques*

Les études antérieures des marchés médiévaux d’Angleterre ont rarement combiné documents écrits disponibles et le matériel archéologique. En considérant les données du Yorkshire, cette étude adopte une approche combinée qui examine le rôle des marchés dans la distribution des récipients en céramique. L’importance d’étudier attentivement une telle distribution est illustrée par la production et la distribution de poteries médiévales dans The Vale of Pickering (en français « la vallée de Pickering » ). Ici, l’impact des marchés ruraux émergents au cours des XIIe et XIIIe siècles est examiné plus en détail et des preuves de potiers subvenant aux besoins spécifiques de la population rurale sont présentées.

**Mot-clés:** *Production de poteries, répartition des céramiques, marchés ruraux, marmites.*

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## Zusammenfassung

*„Dieser kleiner Töpfer ging zum Markt": das Potential von Keramik für die Untersuchung sozial-ökonomischer Einflüsse von ländlichen Märkten in Yorkshire (England) im Mittelalter*

Bisher haben Studien über Englands mittelalterliche Märkte selten die verfügbaren schriftlichen Quellen mit archäologischem Material kombiniert. Diese Studie verfolgt einen solchen Ansatz und zeigt auf Basis von Daten aus Yorkshire, wie Keramik genutzt werden kann, um die Rolle von Märkten beim Vertrieb von Keramikgefäßen zu untersuchen. Anhand der mittelalterlichen Produktion von Töpfen und dessen Vertrieb im Vale of Pickering wird die Komplexität der Keramikverbreitung dargestellt und die Bedeutung von detaillierten Untersuchungen hervorgehoben. Der Einfluss der sich während des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts etablierenden Märkte im ländlichen Raum wird hier genauer untersucht und Belege dafür präsentiert, dass Töpfer*innen gezielt auf die Bedürfnisse der Landbevölkerung eingegangen sind.

**Schlagwörter:** *Keramikproduktion, Keramikverbreitung, ländliche Märkte, Kochtöpfe.*

## Introduction

Medieval weekly markets and annual fairs have long been attributed a central role in the economic development of both England and Europe (*Britnell 2001*). In England, due to the exceptional wealth of written documents, such markets have been extensively discussed and are thus acknowledged as an important cornerstone of medieval life (*Farmer 1991*; *Masschaele 1997*; *Schofield 2003*, 131–156). While a few recent studies (e.g. *Oksanen – Lewis 2020*) have combined this documentary evidence with archaeological data to study the wider and local economic impact of medieval markets, the consideration of non-metal objects (e.g. wooden objects, pottery), which equally depended on markets to spread, has received less attention.

This chapter will integrate documentary and material evidence to investigate the emergence of markets in Yorkshire and their influence on the distribution of pottery. First, a brief overview of medieval markets and fairs in England will be provided, after which their role in the distribution of pottery is explored. This is followed by a more in-depth discussion of these trends in the Yorkshire region, alongside a detailed sub-regional case study that highlights how pottery can be used to investigate the socioeconomic landscapes of medieval markets.

## Medieval markets and fairs in England

It is important to first define both 'weekly markets' and 'annual fairs; as we find them in medieval England. Weekly markets were held regularly on a specific day of the week in both rural and urban settlements (also known as borough markets). Annual fairs were commonly held on the saint's day of the local parish church and, in comparison to weekly markets, drew in people from a wider area (*Farmer 1991*, 339–347). Besides their economic role, markets and fairs were also of social, religious, political and legal importance and presented a rare opportunity where these different spheres of medieval society converged (*Britnell 1978*).

Before the Norman Conquest of AD 1066 the licensing of new markets was not monopolised by the Crown, and markets were thus established where it was beneficial to both the local lord and the peasants (*Britnell 1978*, 189). As a result, it was places such as ports, urban settlements and secular and ecclesiastical estate centres where market-related activity across England occurred. While regional differences, such as the establishment of the Danelaw in Northern England, might have changed the organisation and jurisdiction of these markets, an overall development towards the more institutional market structure of the 11th and 12th centuries is evident (*Britnell 1996*).

After the Norman Conquest, the Domesday survey records around 60 markets taking place in primarily urban settlements (*Darby 1986*, 318–319). Although new markets and fairs were granted in the 11th and 12th centuries, there seems to be considerable ambiguity about what that actually entailed for the people living in and visiting these places (*Britnell 1978*, 190–194). From the 13th century onwards, weekly markets and annual fairs were more systematically granted to secular and ecclesiastical lords (*Britnell 1981*), thus providing us with specific starting dates for these institutions. This increase in the licensing of markets and fairs probably accelerated after the Quo Warranto proceedings, which from 1274 reported on unauthorised markets (*Britnell 1981*, 211). In many cases, it is likely that such charters marked the formalising of existing market activity (*Dyer 1995*), as opposed to always indicating a new market foundation. From the mid-14th century onwards, the number of new markets being established declined rapidly across the country. In addition, the number of rural markets operating in the 15th and 16th centuries decreased. Reasons such as increasing peasant mobility, urbanisation and demographic changes have all been raised to explain this dwindling number of markets and market foundations (*Farmer 1991*, 338–339; *Schofield 2003*, 133).

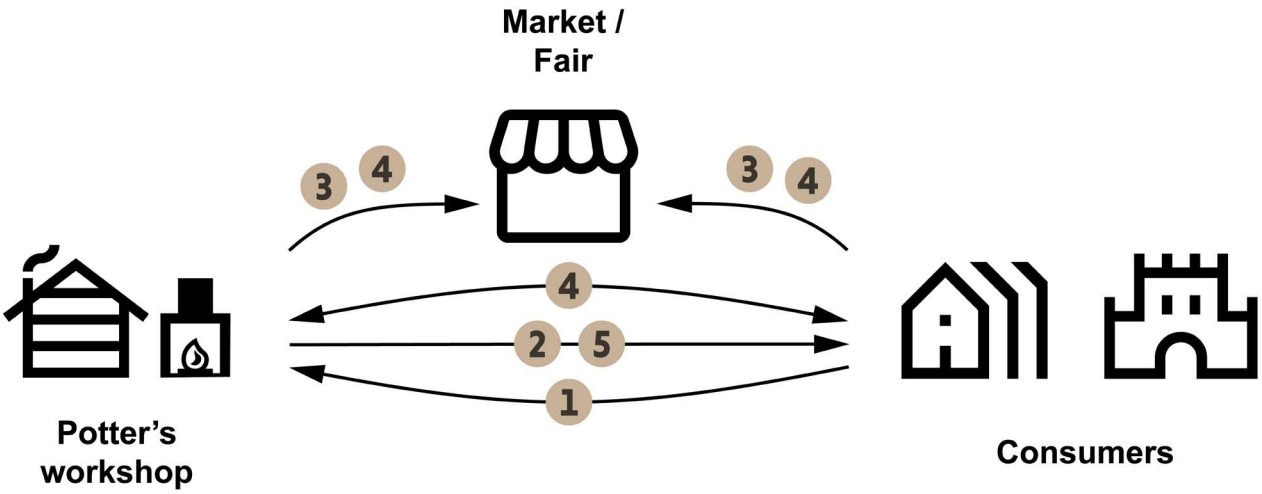



*Fig. 1. Basic means of distribution through which pottery could have reached consumers: 1) direct sale from workshop, 2) itinerant salesman, 3) market sales, 4) middlemen and 5) estate supplies (© Y. Signer).*

As such, the development of markets and fairs in England can be traced through documentary evidence. However, such documents rarely mention non-agricultural commodities (e.g. pottery) that we find in the archaeological record, thus necessitating a combined examination.

## The role of markets in the production and marketing of pottery

It is within this dynamic and changing socioeconomic environment that pottery production in England went through a pronounced phase of development caused by an increase in both demand and supply. The former was mostly triggered by increasing population numbers and economic stability and the latter by the wider adaptation of the potter's wheel and the proliferation of potters in both urban and rural areas (*McCarthy – Brooks 1988*, 68–81). Additional developments were driven from outside of England, with ceramics from France and the Low Countries being increasingly imported into England's major ports. These vessels not only enjoyed considerable distribution beyond these ports but were also successful in influencing local preference and production, with one example being the proliferation of Rouen-type decorated jugs in the early 13th century (*Pearce et al. 1985*, 28–29). By the mid- to late 14th century, ceramic cooking pots were slowly superseded by the wider introduction of metal equivalents, thus leading to a notable decrease in their production (*McCarthy – Brooks 1988*, 90). While such general developments are visible throughout most of England, regional studies such as Mellor et al. (*1994*) who focus on Oxfordshire have highlighted how the speed and character of these developments varied from place to place.

With this increase in pottery production mirroring the general increase in rural markets during the 12th and 13th centuries, it is unsurprising that previous researchers have emphasised and linked these two trends (e.g. *Le Patourel 1968*, 119). However, research on pottery production and distribution (*Hayfield 1985*, 408–419; *Moorhouse 1981*, *1983*; *Streeten 1984*, 471–482) has highlighted that medieval markets were only one of a variety of different distribution mechanics. Based on this work, a basic framework highlighting common distribution mechanisms for pottery as a commodity can be established (Fig. 1). What is immediately visible when considering the means of distribution in this basic framework is that not all of these necessarily depend on markets. The direct sale from potters' workshops (1 in Fig. 1) and through itinerant salesmen (or the potters themselves) (2 in Fig. 1) are more-direct routes by which pots could be sold to consumers, and are both well attested in archaeological and written evidence (*Le Patourel 1968*, 109; *Moorhouse 1978*, 16). In addition, the supplying of pottery to manorial or ecclesiastical estates (5 in Fig. 1) also does not depend on markets at all, and the receiving centre might have then distributed pots to other parts of the estate (*Moorhouse 1981*, 111). Middlemen (4 in Fig. 1), who bought pottery in bulk from potters, would have fulfilled a type of hybrid role by either selling directly to consumers or at markets. This usually involved transport to more-distant markets (in contrast to the more local trade of the itinerant salesman – 2 in Fig. 1), where the products would have been of a certain novelty (*Kilmurry 1979*, 171–172).

These different mechanisms demonstrate the complexity in the movement of ceramic products from

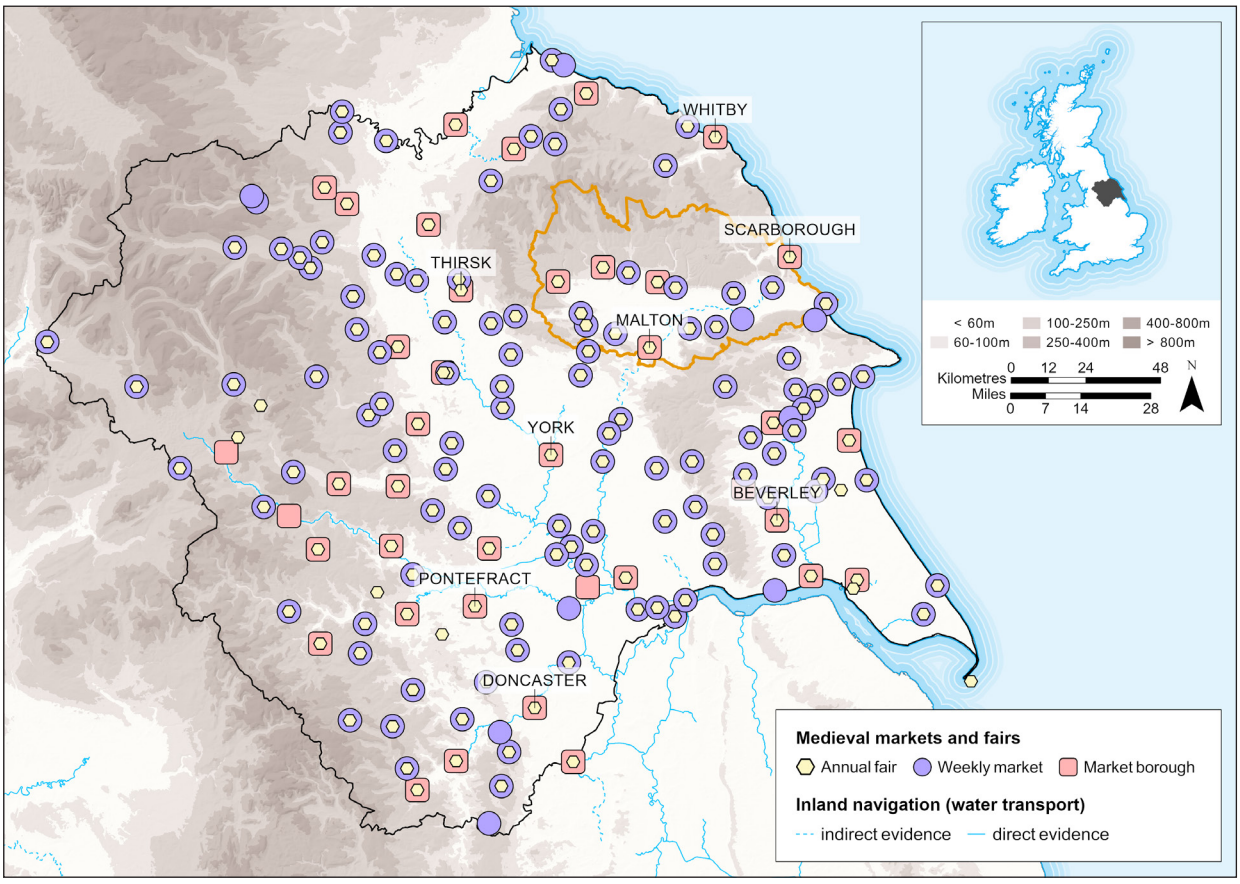



*Fig. 2. Overview of medieval markets and fairs in Yorkshire. The case study area (the Vale of Pickering) is highlighted in orange (see below) (© Source: by author, data from Letters 2013, topology derived from Jarvis et al. 2008 and inland navigation from Oksanen 2019).*

their production sites to consumers. As such, the spread of pottery needs to be examined in detail to tease apart the aforementioned means of distribution. Through this, the role of markets in the wider picture of pottery trade can be established, which this chapter will investigate based on data from the Yorkshire region.

## Medieval Yorkshire: markets, fairs and ceramic production

So far, 157 settlements with weekly markets and 149 with annual fairs have been identified in Yorkshire dating to between the late 11th and mid-16th centuries (Fig. 2 and Tab. 1). Previous research on these markets has mainly focussed on the documentary evidence of those located in urban areas (e.g. *Richardson 1961*) and in certain sub-regions (e.g. *Waites 1982*). As the development of these markets has not yet been re-examined for the whole of Yorkshire since the seminal work of McCutcheon (*1940*) on the matter, the following section will briefly review this development and explore how its role in the region's pottery production has previously been discussed.

## The development of markets and fairs in Yorkshire

The earliest documented evidence for weekly markets in medieval Yorkshire comes from the Domesday survey, where York is the region's only settlement recorded to have an existing market (*Darby 1986*, 318–319). It is highly likely that Beverley, another important pre-Conquest ecclesiastical and economic centre, would likewise have had a market dating to before the Conquest. However, no such record can be found in the documentary evidence, and its first market was confirmed shortly after in AD 1109. Many markets emerging in the 12th century were in similar economically important settlements, for example in ports (e.g. Hedon and Scarborough) and near newly erected castles (e.g. Doncaster and Pontefract).

In the 13th century, markets taking place in rural settlements were more regularly granted, and a particular peak can be identified in the decades between 1250 and 1299, when around 39% of all markets and fairs in Yorkshire emerged (Tab. 1). This period of proliferation aligns well with data from across England (see above and Unwin 1981, 237), and can be seen as part of a general attempt to increase internal trade. This

| Date range | Weekly markets | | Annual fairs | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % |
| < 1100 AD | 1 | <1% | 0 | 0% |
| 1100 – 1199 | 12 | 8% | 11 | 7% |
| 1200 – 1299 | 96 | 61% | 86 | 58% |
| ↳ 1200 – 1249 | 35 | 22% | 26 | 18% |
| ↳ 1250 – 1299 | 61 | 39% | 60 | 40% |
| 1300 – 1399 | 44 | 28% | 51 | 34% |
| ↳ 1300 – 1349 | 35 | 22% | 41 | 28% |
| ↳ 1350 – 1399 | 9 | 6% | 10 | 6% |
| 1400 – 1499 | 2 | 1% | 1 | <1% |
| > 1500 AD | 2 | 1% | 0 | 0% |
| **Total** | **157** | **100%** | **149** | **100%** |

*Tab. 1. Overview of when weekly markets and annual fairs were granted in medieval Yorkshire (© Letters 2013).*

pattern is especially highlighted as a large majority of market charters issued during this period (75%, 46 out of 61) granted both a weekly market and annual fair in the same year, thus providing the lord with a weekly income in tolls and an annual fair to attract wider economic trade.

The 14th century in Yorkshire (like elsewhere in England) was studded with phases of famine, war, disease and social unrest, leading to a difficult and volatile economic climate (*Dyer 1989*; *Waugh 1991*, 21). This is partly reflected in the decrease in the number of markets and fairs granted in the first half of the century, observable both in Yorkshire (Tab. 1) and across the country (*Britnell 1981*, 210). It is likely that some of these markets were founded in direct response to this challenging economic situation in order to stimulate and increase economic activity.

Everitt (1990, 18) identifies a total of 47 markets that were still active in Yorkshire between 1500 and 1640. Notably, 41 of these (87%) were founded before 1300, highlighting the low survival rate of markets founded after the 14th century. In addition, out of all markets founded before 1300, only 38% (41 out of 109) survived into the 16th century. As such, and following the national picture highlighted above, from the 15th century onwards an increasing number of rural markets fell out of use, while market towns grew in socioeconomic importance (*Dyer 2005*, 173–174).

## Yorkshire pottery production and trade

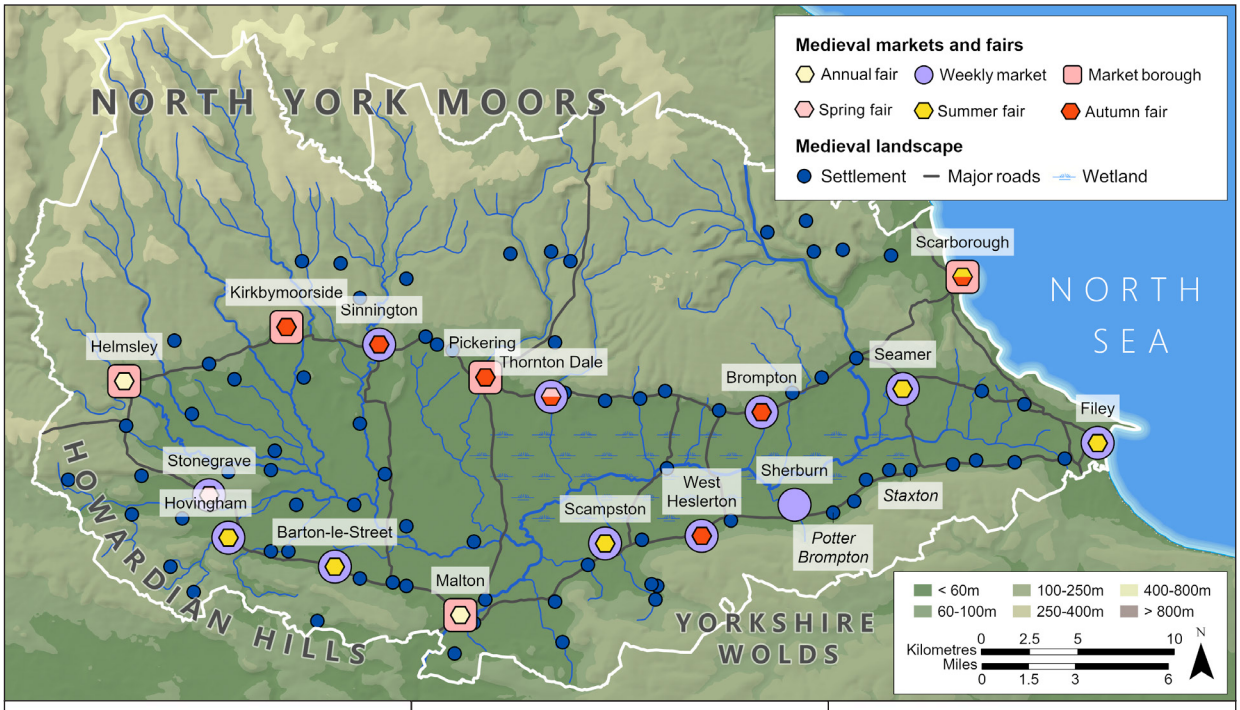
Before the Conquest, pottery production in Yorkshire was limited, and many wares used in places like York were imported from Lincolnshire (*Mainman – Jenner 2013*, 1174). This pattern changed in the aftermath of the Conquest when pottery production emerged in urban places with weekly markets (e.g. Beverley, Hedon and Doncaster) (Fig. 2). The only outlier here is York, where there is so far little conclusive evidence for pottery production's taking place until the late 13th/early 14th century (*Mainman 2020*, 71).

During the 13th and 14th centuries, more pottery production sites emerged in the countryside, with some of these providing wares for urban settlements. This is especially evident in York, which was importing wares from sources 14 mi. (22 km) away (Mainman – Jenner 2013, 1230). Other rural production sites developing during this time were located on ecclesiastical estates and in smaller villages (*Le Patourel 1968*, 124). In the 15th century, more regional potting traditions emerged in Yorkshire, with multiple potteries producing wares to a seemingly similar and recognisable template in different locations (e.g. Humber ware being produced at West Cowick and Holme-on-Spalding-Moor [*Hayfield 1992*]).

As such, the development of pottery production aligns well with the general development of Yorkshire's markets presented above. As a common everyday necessity, a steady supply of ceramic vessels would have been required by the growing population of the 12th and 13th centuries, and the increasing political and economic stability meant that potters could specialise and dedicate more time to their production. However, based on this previous research, it is difficult to establish what role the increasing number of medieval markets had in this development. In addition, the little research that has been done on the distribution of Yorkshire's medieval wares (e.g. *Hayfield 1992*) has only tangentially investigated the role of markets. As such, the rest of this paper will be dedicated to examining the role of markets in the distribution of pottery by investigating this at a sub-regional scale.

## Case study: Vale of Pickering

Located in the north-east of Yorkshire (Fig. 2), the Vale of Pickering is demarcated by large areas of uplands (to the north, west and south) and the North Sea to the east (Fig. 3). The combination of these upland and lowland territories has led to this area being agriculturally exploited since Roman times. By the medieval period, settlements were located between these landscape types, with routeways connecting them to the important ports of Filey and Scarborough in the east and the boroughs of Malton and Helmsley in the west. This case study aims to investigate the distribution of pottery produced in the Vale of Pickering and evaluate whether distribution involving markets can be differentiated from other means (Fig. 1). First, the region's medieval market environment and pottery production locations will be introduced and then the distribution patterns will be investigated.




| Place | Market | Fair |
|---|---|---|
| Barton-le-street | 1246 (Wed) | 1246 (Aug 10) |
| Brompton | 1253 (Mon) | 1253 (Nov 1) |
| Filey | 1221 (Fri) | 1240 (Aug 24) |
| Helmsley | 1190x1210 (unk) | 1353 (unk) |
| Hovingham | 1252 (Thu → Mon) | 1252 (Aug 15) |
| Kirkbymoorside | 1254 (Wed) | 1254 (Sep 8) |

| Place | Market | Fair |
|---|---|---|
| Malton | 1154x79 (unk) | 1295 (unk) |
| Pickering | 1201 (unk) | 1291 (Sep 14) |
| Scampston | 1253 (Wed) | 1253 (Jul 20) |
| Scarborough | 1155 (unk) | 1253 (Aug-Sep*) |
| Seamer | 1382 (Mon) | 1382 (Jul 4) |
| Sherburn | 1256 (unk) | unk |

| Place | Market | Fair |
|---|---|---|
| Sinnington | 1303 (Mon) | 1303 (Nov 11) |
| Stonegrave | 1257 (Mon) | 1257 (E†) |
| Thornton Dale | 1281 (Tue) | 1281 (Nov 1,E†) |
| West Heslerton | 1253 (Fri → Mon) | 1253 (Nov 1) |

* Aug 15 to Sep 29 → market moved to different day
E† fair taking place on Easter

*Fig. 3. The Vale of Pickering, its natural landscape and the known medieval markets and fairs (© Y. Signer, with market and fair data from Letters 2013 and topology derived from Jarvis et al. 2008).*

## Medieval markets and fairs

In the Vale of Pickering, a total of 16 medieval markets have been identified by Letters (*2013*), with 5 of those reaching borough status at some point in the medieval period (Fig. 3). Many of these borough markets were established in the 12th century, thus highlighting their relative early importance and economic prosperity. Some of these boroughs (e.g. Malton) also functioned as gathering centres for agricultural output produced in the Vale of Pickering (*Waites 1982*, 7). However, the relationship between the larger market boroughs and smaller rural markets was not always positive. The burgesses of Scarborough complained in the mid-13th century about the impact of the markets established in the vicinity and appealed to the king for the closure of the markets in Filey, Sherburn and Brompton (*McCutcheon 1940*, 86). Whether this plea was successful is unknown; it does illustrate the area's competitive economic market environment.

Every settlement with a market (bar Sherburn) also had an annual fair (Fig. 3), with Scarborough's being the biggest one, lasting for 45 days and attracting merchants from across England and Northern Europe (*Waites 1982*, 4). The shorter fairs can be categorised into spring, summer and autumn fairs (Fig. 3), the latter of which are widely recognised for their importance in the rural livestock trade (especially near areas of upland) (*Farmer 1991*, 339–340). Multiple such fairs were located on the northern side of the vale near the North York Moors, possibly reflecting the importance of pastoral production. On the southern side of the vale, West Heslerton was the only such autumn fair near the Yorkshire Wolds and would thus have been of particular importance for the livestock trade in the area.

## Pottery production

While pottery production took place in the Vale of Pickering during the Roman period, for example near Malton (*Swan 2002*, 63), commercial production only re-emerges in the two centuries after the Norman Conquest, when a variety of wares were produced in the Howardian Hills, for example at Brandsby (*Mainman – Jenner 2013*, 1230), as well as at Scarborough, Staxton and Potter Brompton (Fig. 3). There is additional place name evidence for pottery production's taking place in Helmsley and Pickering, but these most likely date to the post-medieval period (*Hayes 1988*, 135–136).

## Regional distribution patterns

In light of the proliferation of markets and pottery production in the Vale of Pickering during the 12th and 13th centuries, the distribution of three locally produced wares from this period will be investigated in detail below. These are Scarborough Gritty ware (SGR), dated to approx. 1075–1200 (*Slowikowski et al. 2015*, 8); York Glazed ware (YGL), dated to approx. 1150–1250 (*Mainman – Jenner 2013*, 1203) and not produced in York, see below; and Staxton ware (STX), dated to approx. 1200–1300 (*Slowikowski et al. 2015*, 9). These have been selected because SGR was produced before many of the markets were established in the area; YGL because it was produced until c. 1250, during a period of market proliferation; and STX because it coincides with the peak of markets flourishing in the Vale of Pickering during the 12th to 13th centuries.

The pottery distribution data was collected as part of the author's ongoing research and includes both published and unpublished material from 150 sites located in the Vale of Pickering. The use of data from various specialists can be problematic because identification and quantification methods vary. However, the three wares under investigation have distinct fabrics, and as only presence and absence are plotted, their distributions can be considered representative (Fig. 4).

The distribution of Scarborough Gritty ware (A in Fig. 4) is limited to the immediate area outside of Scarborough, with no wares having been identified on the western side of the vale. While examples of SGR have been found in the Yorkshire Wolds, for example at Wharram Percy (*Slowikowski et al. 2015*, 10), their low number seems to suggest that no dedicated trade of vessels took place, especially as the ware is seemingly absent from 11th- and 12th-century assemblages in Malton. There, wares produced at the more distant Beverley were used more often, suggesting a potentially closer relationship than with Scarborough (at least from a ceramic perspective) and perhaps reflecting the trade between the two settlements.

The distribution of York Glazed ware (B in Fig. 4) contrasts significantly with that of SGR, covering a larger area of the Vale of Pickering and being more prevalent in some market boroughs. As it seems likely that YGL was produced at multiple sites in the Howardian Hills, its presence in the boroughs of Malton and Helmsley is therefore to be expected. However, a distinctive difference to SGR is that YGL was distributed much further afield, for example to the ports of Scarborough and Filey, which could suggest increasing trade across the vale by the 13th century. This much broader spread is also mirrored outside of the Vale of Pickering, with YGL being found in large quantities in York (*Mainman – Jenner 2013*, 1203).

The distribution of Staxton ware shows that it can be found across the region (C in Fig. 4) and even reached into the upland areas (see sites north of Kirkbymoorside). In addition, the ware is frequently found in the boroughs of Malton and Scarborough and seems to have been the main fabric of cooking pots there. Linking STX's wide distribution and the apparent increase in markets during the same time seems tempting, but as outlined above, such distributions could be achieved in several ways. As such, and in order to investigate whether markets were involved in its distribution, the following section will examine the Staxton ware distribution in more detail.

## Market-based distribution of Staxton ware?

As highlighted at the beginning of this chapter, the role of medieval markets in the distribution of medieval pottery is difficult to directly identify through large-scale distributions. The most straightforward way of doing so would be the examination of more- chronologically defined distributions (e.g. specific forms, decorations etc.) that can be linked to the periods where specific markets were present/absent.

Since its first study by T. Brewster in the 1950s, a wide range of Staxton ware rim forms have been identified and linked to a chronological succession between different rim types (*Brewster – Hayfield 1992*, 74). However, attempts at establishing a chronological rim typology have so far been fruitless (e.g. *Slowikowski et al. 2015*, 9–10), thus making a distribution analysis of Staxton ware rim forms linked to specific time frames impossible. In its place, the focus will shift to vessel forms, which show clearer patterns, as will be demonstrated below.

The Staxton ware potters produced a limited set of forms and focussed primarily on cooking pots (*Brewster – Hayfield 1992*). While there is evidence for the production of bowls, jugs and other miscellaneous forms, these have rarely been identified outside of Staxton and Potter Brompton and might not have been produced for a specific market. However, a significant variation in the types of cooking pots is evident, with one particular type standing out – a squat cooking pot (see drawing in Fig. 5). The trapezoidal body shape and wide base are unique in medieval Yorkshire and have been suggested to be related to their use on a peat fire (*Brewster – Hayfield 1992*, 54). The spatial patterning of these so-called peat pots can be analysed based on the dataset, which demonstrates a limited distribution range in areas to the south of the Vale of Pickering and in the Yorkshire Wolds (Fig. 5).

This distribution aligns well with areas where peat was the primary domestic fuel in the 12th and 13th centuries, such as Flixton (*Wightman 1968*, 131) and firewood supplies were limited, such as near Staxton and the Yorkshire Wolds (*Wightman 1968*). In addition, peat

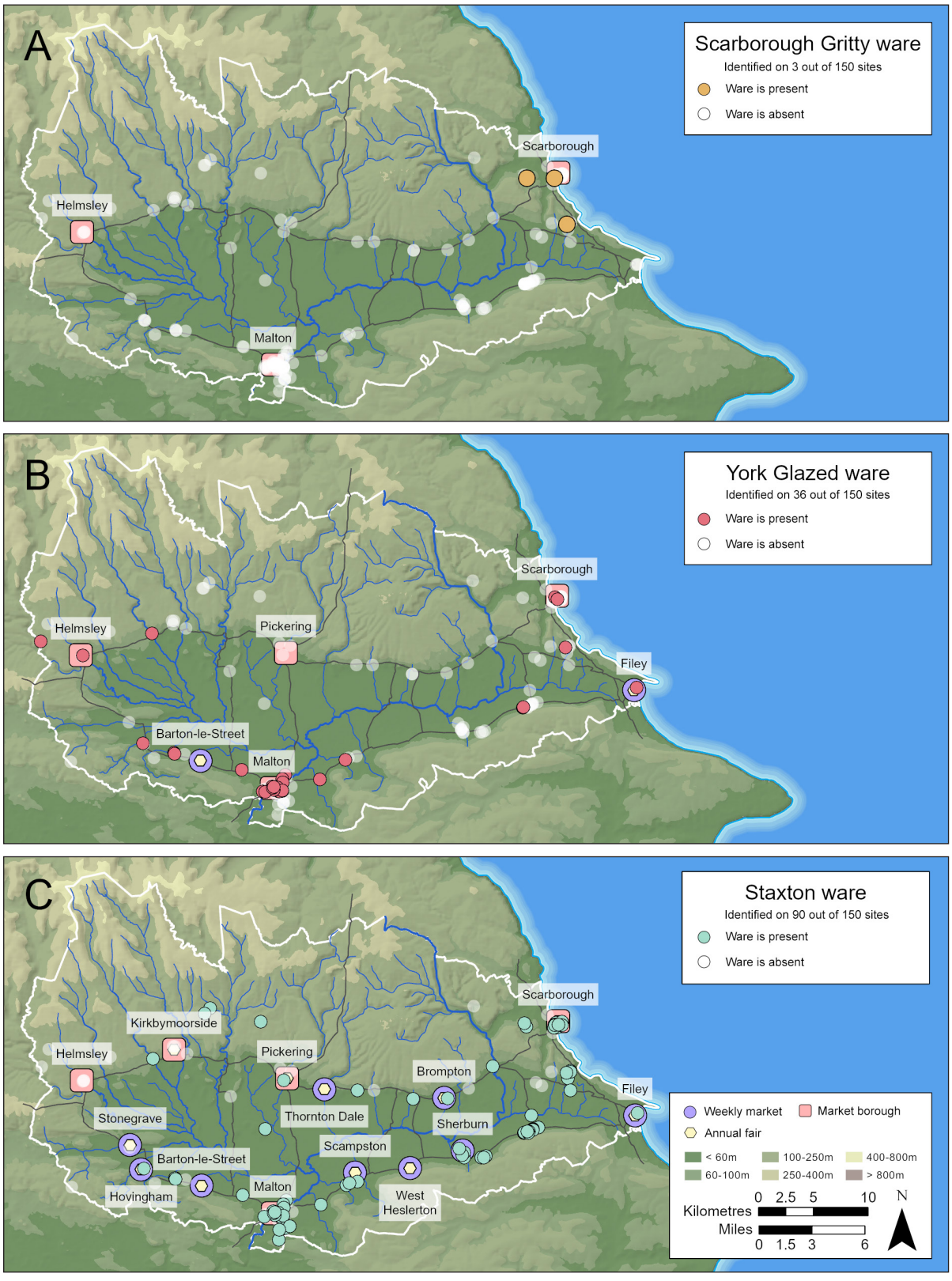



*Fig. 4. Three distribution maps: A) Scarborough Gritty ware, B) York Glazed ware and C) Staxton ware. Markets and fairs that were active during the suggested dating of the individual wares have been added to each distribution (© Source: ceramic data by author, markets and fairs from Letters 2013).*

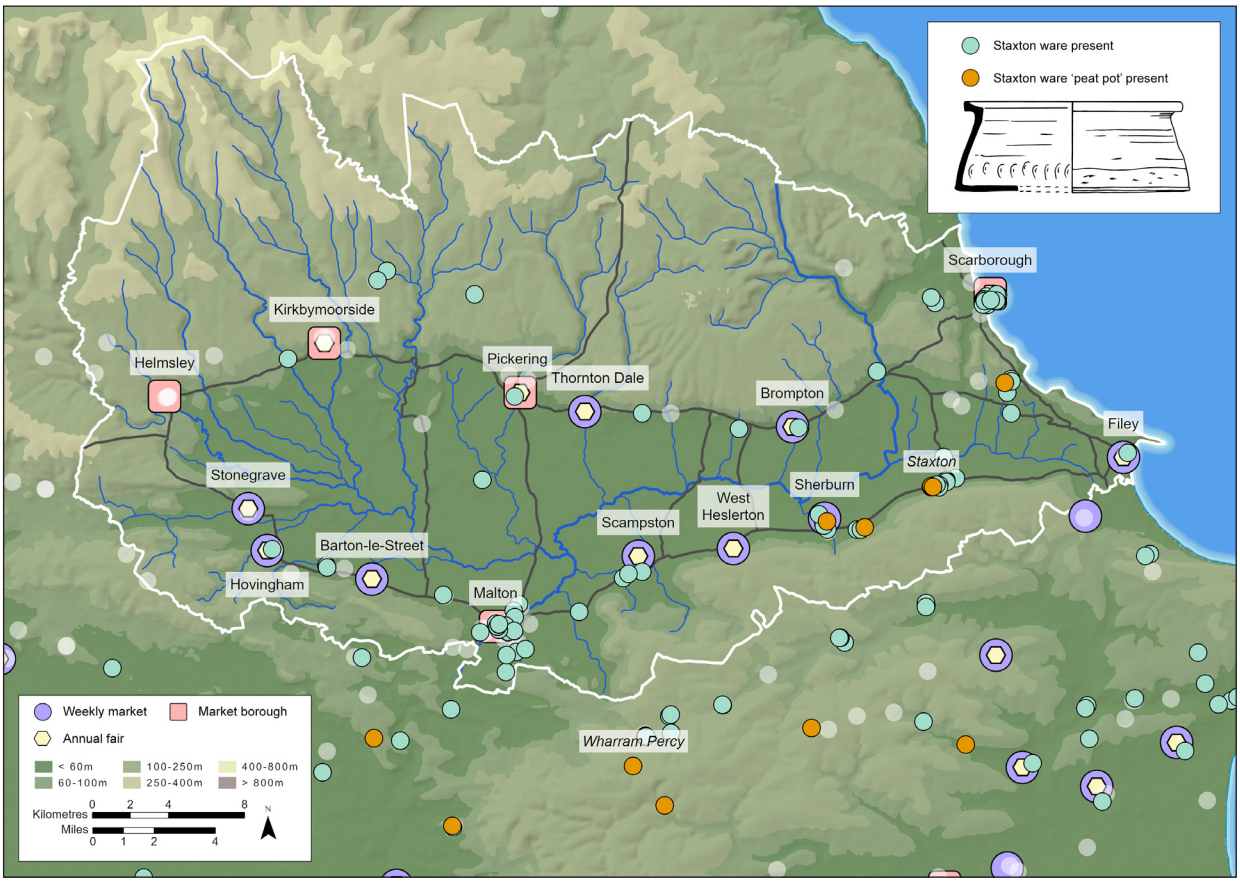



*Fig. 5. Distribution of Staxton ware peat pots found in the Vale of Pickering and on the Yorkshire Wolds, in relation to contemporary markets and fairs and other ceramic assemblages (© Staxton ware peat pot redrawn by author from Brewster – Hayfield 1992, 55).*

pots have not been identified in the more-urban areas like Scarborough or Malton, even though Staxton ware was the predominant cooking pot fabric. The distribution on the Yorkshire Wolds is of particular interest because many of the analysed ceramic assemblages contained numerous peat pots. At Wharram Percy, a particularly interesting example of a heavily repaired peat pot was also identified (*Slowikowski 1989*, 39), which indicates the form's relative importance in rural communities (Fig. 5). The terrain between these peat pot assemblages and their production sites at Staxton and Potter Brompton is very hilly, and as such would have acted as a natural boundary for potters who tended to transport their wares in bulk (*Moorhouse 1981*, 110). In comparison, transport along the established flat routeways between Staxton and Malton would have been significantly easier. With no evidence that the production sites were part of a larger estate and the considerable distance between them and the identified peat pots, estate supply and direct sale from the potter's workshop can both be excluded as likely means of distribution. Instead, and considering the lack of medieval markets or fairs in the Yorkshire Wolds (Fig. 5), it can be suggested that these pots were acquired by the consumers either at one of the weekly markets between Staxton and Malton or else at the annual fair at West Heslerton. As consumers would possibly only transport a relatively small number of vessels, travel over the hills would have been easier than for the potters themselves. Due to the already large proportion of Staxton ware present in ceramic assemblages in Malton and its proximity to the furthest part of the peat pot distribution, it emerges as a strong potential candidate for where these pots could have been acquired. While the role of itinerant salesmen or middlemen in selling these wares cannot be dismissed entirely, the wide geographical distribution suggests redistribution through a market in Malton.

These peat pots can also be seen as part of the wider-ranging socioeconomic changes introduced into the Vale of Pickering (and more widely in rural Yorkshire) by the emergence of markets and fairs in the 12th and 13th centuries. The recurrent market opportunities meant that the Staxton ware potters could not only provide large quantities of wares to both ends of the Vale of Pickering (e.g. Scarborough and Malton), but also adapt their vessel repertoire and tailor their production to their customers (i.e. producing pots that were optimised for customers

who used peat fires). As such, the impact of the emerging rural markets was not just increasing the amount of pottery being distributed (as seen in Fig. 4), but also directly influencing the type of material culture available to large proportions of the rural population. While this case study has only focussed on a singular vessel type of a singular ware in a sub-section of Yorkshire, it highlights how much can be learned from the study of medieval pottery beyond its use as a basic identifier of trade and as a dating method.

## Conclusion

Previous research on medieval weekly markets and annual fairs in England and Yorkshire has rarely combined documentary evidence and archaeological material to examine the wider role of market institutions in disseminating material culture. Medieval pottery is particularly suited to such research because there is not only a wealth of available archaeological evidence, but it has also been previously linked to the increase in markets in the 12th and 13th centuries. However, alternative means (e.g. peddling, estate transport etc.) through which these wares could have been distributed need to be taken into consideration. For example, pottery distributions in the Vale of Pickering have highlighted that a detailed study focussing on specific aspects of a ware (e.g. a particular vessel form), as well as the different means of distribution, is necessary to establish the role of medieval markets in the dissemination of certain wares. As such, and in order to better investigate the role of medieval markets in the distribution of ceramic wares, future studies need to scrutinise such patterns more closely and consider the wider landscape in which production sites, markets and consumers were located.

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