

Medieval Pottery from Leominster (Site LPP97)

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One hundred and seventy-seven sherds of pottery and ceramic building material from an evaluation in Bridge Street, Leominster, carried out by Hereford City and County Archaeological Group (trading) Ltd were submitted for study. The aims of the study were:

- To identify the ware and form of each sherd and to make a basic record of the collection
- To establish the date-range of the pottery and its implications for medieval occupation on the site
- To assess the potential of the pottery for further analysis
- To assess the potential of the site for archaeological research

Common Names

The pottery was classified using the fabric series developed for the City of Hereford and published in 1983 (Vince 1983) and augmented to include material from Leominster (Etnam Street). Three new codes were invented: LEOBR1, LEORT1 and LEORT2. These were used to code fragments of brick and tile of distinctive types which have not been recorded before.

Code	Name	Date range	Source
A4?	Hereford Fabric A4	Early 13 th to late 13 th /early 14 th century	?Lugg Valley
A7B	Hereford Fabric A7B	Mid 13 th to ?Late 15 th /early 16 th century	Herefordshire, including Hereford
A7C	Hereford Fabric A7C	Mid 16 th century	Herefordshire
A7D	Hereford Fabric A7D	Late 16 th and 17 th century	Herefordshire
B1	Hereford Fabric B1	12 th to 14 th Century	Malvern Chase - Hanley Castle
B4	Hereford Fabric B4	Mid 13 th to 16 th century	Malvern Chase - Hanley Castle
B5	Hereford Fabric B5	Mid 16 th to Mid 17 th century	Malvern Chase - Hanley Castle
C1	Hereford Fabric C1	Late 11 th to 13 th century	?Worcester
CONP	European porcelain	18 th -20 th century	England and Europe
CSTN	Cistercian ware	16 th - early 17 th century	England
LEOBR1	Leominster Brick fabric 1	16 th - 17 th century?	Herefordshire
LEORT1	Leominster Roof Tile fabric 1	13 th -16 th century?	Herefordshire
LEORT2	Leominster Roof Tile fabric 2	17 th -18 th century?	Herefordshire
LUGG	Lugg Valley ware	Late 13 th to 15 th century	?Lugg Valley
LUGG FINE	Fine Lugg Valley ware	Late 13 th to 15 th century	?Lugg Valley
MP	Midlands Purple	15 th -17 th century	Midlands (Staffordshire, Derbyshire?)
OXAM	Brill/Boarstall ware	Late 13 th to 15 th century	Buckinghamshire / Oxfordshire border
STCO	Staffordshire combed	late 17 th -late 18 th century	Staffordshire
STCOA R	Staffordshire coarse	Mid 17 th -late 18 th century	Staffordshire
STEM	Staffordshire embossed	mid 17 th -early 18 th century	Staffordshire
STRE	Staffordshire redware	mid-17 th to early 18 th century	Staffordshire
STSL	Staffordshire slipped	mid 17 th -early 18 th century	Staffordshire
TPW	Transfer printed ware	mid 18 th -20 th century	Staffordshire?
WHITE	Whiteware	late 19 th -20 th century	Staffordshire?

Source

The majority of the material found is of local origin, being produced mainly in north Herefordshire with a small quantity which might be from the Hereford area.

The second most common source of pottery was the Malvern Chase potteries, centred on the parish of Hanley Castle, near Upton on Severn. A study of the distribution of this pottery carried out in the 1970s showed that in north Herefordshire an increasing proportion of pottery used was obtained from Malvern Chase, although there is some pottery from this source as early as the 12th or early 13th centuries. The chase was enclosed in the mid 17th century and this seems to have finally killed off the pottery industry.

The earliest medieval pottery used in the area was imported from sources to the east; Stafford in the 10th and early 11th centuries and probably Worcester in the late 11th, 12th and early 13th centuries. Sherds of ?Worcester sandy ware were found in one assemblage from Bridge Street (context 7022).

In the 13th century local production began and north Herefordshire obtained most of its pottery from local sources. Gradually, however, the Malvern Chase potters expanded their market into this area and by the late 15th century it is unlikely that any local pottery production survived. During the 16th century, however, the post medieval Welsh Borderland potteries were established in the area. These potters made a range of vessels which were initially complementary to those produced in Malvern Chase: black-glazed cups and brown-glazed bowls being the most common. The Bridge Street assemblage includes examples of both types (A7C and A7D respectively) and includes several sherds which are very similar in form and treatment to 16th-century Malvern Chase wares. These are likely to be amongst the earliest local post-medieval wares produced and are interesting for what they reveal about the affinities of these 16th-century Herefordshire potters.

In contrast to most urban assemblages from Herefordshire, this collection contains relatively little material from outside of the region (ie taking Malvern Chase and Worcester to be local producers) and no imported material at all.

Date

Twenty-seven sherds are potentially or definitely of 12th or early 13th-century date. These include the C1 cooking pots mentioned above from 7022 which were found with B1 cooking pots including an example with a distinct rim datable to the 12th century. The B1 cooking pot sherds from contexts 7011 and 7012 are likely to be of 12th or early 13th century date whereas some of the other b1 sherds are definitely later (eg the rim from context 5005 which is of a type datable to the later 13th or early 14th century).

Seventy-one sherds are of later medieval date, from the late 13th to the 15th century. In most cases it is not possible to be more precise but some sherds of LUGG were from handmade cooking pots and jugs, which suggests that they are of 13th-century date (contexts 1002, 7013 and 7014). The eight sherds of B4 by contrast are more likely to date to the end of this period.

The early post-medieval period is represented by a group of 40 sherds which include fragments of brick. In addition to the locally-produced wares mentioned above, this group includes a vessel of Midlands Purple ware, a type rarely found so far west (two sherds of the same jar were found, in contexts 7017 and 7018).

A group of 23 sherds of 17th and early 18th-century wares was found, all of well-known types and showing no obvious concentration in any particular part of this period. Finally, eight sherds of late 18th-century and later date were found. Some of these are definitely of very recent date, included a fragment of frogged brick and a sherd of a whiteware jar with the vertical fluting typical of marmalade jars.

Potential of the pottery assemblage for further work

Nine sherds were identified as requiring illustration for archive purposes. This would aid further work on the medieval and later pottery of Leominster. None of the assemblages found is of sufficient size to warrant quantification.

7012	A4	JUG	WHEELTHROWN; RING AND DOT STAMP
5005	A7B	JAR	SPLASHED OF ?COPPER-FLECKED GLAZE ON INT OF RIM
7014	A7B	JUG	STRAP HANDLE WITH DIAG SLASHING; UNDERFIRED

5009	A7D	PIP	THUMBED STRIP AT NECK CF B5
6020	LEORT1	RIDGE	CONICAL KNOB
7009	LEORT1	RIDGE	KNOBBED
7014	LUGG	JUG	RSD DIAMONDS
6020	LUGG FINE	CHAF	RIM AND SUPPORT; CUGL
7017	MP	JAR	RIM

All of the pottery should be retained and deposited in a recognised archaeological repository.

Potential of the Site for archaeological research

The pottery from this site demonstrates that the water course which preceded occupation on the site was open in the 12th century, although it is not possible from the small assemblage to be more precise about the date. Occupation is likely to have started in the late 12th or 13th century and continued until recent times.

There are differences in the range of material present between this assemblage and that recovered recently from Etnam Street and these differences are both social (with the Bridge Street site being of lower status) and chronological. Should the decision be taken to destroy any of the remaining archaeological levels on this site then the opportunity to recover large stratified assemblages should be given a high priority. The mid 16th century occupation on the site has the potential to reveal details of the origins of the post-medieval pottery industry of north Herefordshire and includes material not so far present amongst waste from the north Herefordshire potteries themselves.

Should the opportunity to examine the early water channel underlying the site be taken, then a better date for the filling of this channel and the subsequent occupation along Bridge Street could be produced if larger stratified assemblages were collected.

Appendix One: Terminus Post Quem for each assemblage

Context	Number of vessels (minimum)	Date range of pottery
1002	8	modern
1005	1	med
1009	2	modern
2003	6	m 16th and resid
3003	2	med
3008	4	l 17th
5005	7	m 16th
5009	9	m 16th
5012	2	med
6000	7	mod
6002	1	17th
6016	6	l 17th
6018	4	l med/e16th
6020	27	m 16th
6022	7	m 16th
6024	1	m 16th
7001	6	m 17th
7002	1	med
7009	3	m 17th
7010	3	e 13th
7011	4	m 13th
7012	1	m 13th
7013	6	e 13th
7014	11	?med with one intrusive 16th c?
7015	3	17th

7016	2 m 16th
7017	3 16th or e 17th
7018	2 16th or e 17th
7022	13 12th
T4 TOP OF CLAY	3 m 17th
