

The Pottery and other Finds from Much Cowarne, Herefordshire (MCP04)

Alan Vince

Finds from a series of test pits dug by Herefordshire Archaeology in a field at Much Cowarne, Herefordshire, in order to investigate colluvial formation indicate activity in the area from perhaps the pre-Roman Iron Age to the 20th century. The finds indicate several periods of activity separated by periods in which there was little or no pottery deposited.

The finds consist of ceramic building material (brick and tile), some scraps of fired clay, a fragment of post-medieval glass bottle, two fragments of iron and sherds of pottery ranging from the pre-Roman Iron Age to the 20th century in date (Table 1). All were recorded by fragment count, vessel count (i.e. the maximum number of vessels represented by the sherds within a single context) and weight in grams.

Table 1

class	Nosh	NoV	Weight
CBM	45	41	247
CTP	14	14	109
FCLAY	3	3	5
IRON	2	2	135
PMGL	1	1	13
POTTERY	66	58	492
Grand Total	131	119	1001

Ceramic Building Material

Forty-five fragments of ceramic building material were recovered. They range in date from the later medieval to the modern period, suggesting that the earlier occupation represented by Roman and earlier medieval pottery was not associated with the use of brick or tile.

Five fragments of Malvern Chase ridge tiles were recovered. Four have the red-firing, sandy fabric which was used in the later medieval and earlier post-medieval period (up to the early 16th century, Hereford Fabric B4) and one has the lighter-coloured fabric which was used from the mid 16th to the early 17th centuries (Hereford Fabric B5).

The remaining fragments are mostly from bricks made from the local Herefordshire silty, micaceous clay (Hereford Fabric A10). A minority of the tiles have abundant clay or mudstone pellets which are absent from the remainder (all from Trenches 6 and 7). None of the fragments was large enough to measure dimensions nor could the precise

manufacturing method be determined (although all were undoubtedly made by hand in individual wooden moulds).

A small quantity of modern ceramic building material was recovered (MODTIL in Appendix 1). This included fragments of plain whiteware wall tiles, which probably came from a washhouse, pantry or an agricultural outbuilding. The 11 fragments were recovered from trenches 2, 3, 4 and 16.

Clay Tobacco Pipes

Fourteen fragments of clay tobacco pipe were recovered, all from the 17th century occupation. All have the wide bore diameters characteristic of early to mid 17th-century pipes. Eight bowls or fragments of bowl were recovered. Most were undecorated forms of c.1640-60 but one has a stamp on the heel. These pipes date to the transitional period between the early century, where London pipemakers enforced their monopoly and the later 17th century, when there is abundant evidence for local production, mainly in market towns. However, this is the period at which the rural Pipe Aston industry began and a north Herefordshire source should also be considered.

Fired Clay

Three small abraded fragments of fired clay were recovered from Trench 1. Their fabric is similar to that of the post-medieval bricks (Hereford A10) but is slightly coarser. One of the fragments has a probable wattle impression and it is likely that all three are daub from a wattle and daub structure.

Iron

Two iron objects were recovered, both from the 17th century occupation. One was a hook with nail holes for attachment to a wall and the other was a decorative ironwork strip, which might come from a piece of furniture (such as a box) or a structure (for example, a door).

Glassware

A single fragment from a dark green glass bottle was recovered from the 17th century occupation. The piece is too small to establish the precise form, but such bottles were first made in the 1640s or '50s and came into widespread use in the succeeding decades, replacing imported Frechen stoneware bottles.

Pottery

Iron Age

A single sherd of Iron Age or early Romano-British pottery was recovered, from Trench 6. The sherd has a fabric tempered with coarse angular fragments of Malvernian rock, a fabric used in both the Iron Age and early Roman periods ({Peacock 1969 #22133}). The sherd is probably from a jar, used for either cooking or storage.

Roman

Eleven very abraded sherds of Romano-British pottery were recovered, from Trenches 1, 5, 6 and 12. All were of fine, untempered oxidized Severn Valley ware (Hereford Fabric A1). A distinction in fabric can be seen in thin section between vessels made using weathered Mercian Mudstone, which outcrops to the east of the Malvern Hills, those made using Lower Lias clays and those made using Devonian marls, which outcrop throughout Herefordshire. In the absence of such studies it can only be stated that the vessels were probably made within 30-40km of Much Cowarne.

Medieval

Twenty-one sherds of medieval pottery were recovered. Most of these were moderately abraded (10 sherds), six were very abraded and five fresh or slightly abraded.

Ten of these sherds probably date to the later 12th to mid 13th century. They consist of sherds of handmade Malvern Chase jars (Hereford Fabric B1), two of which are rims of early 13th-century form; a sherd from a locally-produced handmade jar (Hereford Fabric A2) and a sherd from a Malvern Chase tripod pitcher of Hereford Fabric B3. As a group, these sherds are consistent with an early 13th-century date. They come from Trenches 5, 6, 7 and 12.

Eleven sherds of later medieval Malvern Chase ware (Hereford Fabric B4) were found. Although some of these were of moderate size, most were also small and abraded. The sherds come from jugs (6 sherds), jars (3 sherds), a dripping dish and a pancheon. The jug form was used throughout the later medieval period but the other forms are mostly found in later 15th and 16th-century contexts. The B4 sherds come from Trenches 2, 5, 11 and 12, as well as from the 17th-century occupation (jar and pancheon sherds).

Late Medieval to early Post-medieval

In addition to the possibly 16th-century sherds described above, the site also produced 29 sherds of post-medieval date, some of which may be contemporary with the B4 vessels.

Three sherds come from Cistercian ware cups, a type which preceded the local production of black-glazed cups and other vessels (Hereford A7d) which began in the later 16th century.

A single sherd from a Malvern Chase pink fabric pancheon was also found. This type dates from the mid 16th to the early 17th centuries (Hereford Fabric B5).

Seven sherds of Post-Medieval Welsh Borderland ware (Hereford Fabric A7d) were recovered. They consist of three jugs, two pancheons, and two jars. These vessels were probably being made at various sites in the Welsh Borderland from the later 16th century onwards. In the north of the county, they seem to have ceased to be used before c.1700 but in the south-east of the county they probably continued in production and use into the mid 18th century (for example, at Newent Glasshouse, where the documentary evidence for potting ceases c.1750, {Vince 1977 #25323}).

Two sherds of un-recognised glazed red earthenware were recovered. They are probably both from the same vessel, an internally-glazed bowl, and both come from Trench 7.

The remaining sherds are all of non-local types: Nottingham Stoneware (NOTS) and a variety of Staffordshire slipwares (similar wares were produced in Bristol and, probably, in the Ironbridge Gorge area). The latter include a brown stoneware tankard, a mottled ware vessel, redware dishes with internal white slip and glaze and yellow-bodied hollow wares.

As a group, these later post-medieval wares probably date to the early 18th century, since they include stoneware tankards which are uncommon until after c.1700. However, this pottery dating contrasts with that of the clay tobacco pipes and it is more likely that the pottery represents occupation or activity which spans a considerable period of time. The sherds found in association with the pipes are all of types which could date to the mid/late 17th century (the earliest dated yellow-bodied Staffordshire slipware known to the writer dates to the 1670s).

Modern

Four small sherds of early modern pottery were recovered. Two are of Creamware and two of Pearlware. Both types were mass-produced, in the Staffordshire Potteries and elsewhere, from the late 18th century (c.1765 and c.1780 onwards respectively).

Discussion

There was clearly activity on the site in the late Iron Age or Roman period, represented by daub and pottery, but the majority of the Roman finds are small and abraded and probably indicate activity close to the site but not on it.

The finds indicate several later periods of activity, each separated by a hiatus from earlier and later activity. The earliest of these probably dates to the early 13th century. Subsequent activity is not so easy to define, but there certainly appears to be activity on the site in the late medieval through to the early 18th centuries, represented by pottery and ridge tiles, with

little sign of any hiatus. Within this period, the material recorded as “17th century occupation” forms a discrete group of mid-17th-century date, consisting of pottery, ceramic building material, glass, iron and clay tobacco pipes. Finally, there is a spread of recent material, represented by pottery and ceramic building material. This late material seems to include debris from the demolition of a farm outbuilding or wash house.

Appendix 1

trench	context	class	cname	subfabric	Form	Description	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Condition
	17TH CENTURY OCC	CTP	PIPECLAY		PIPE	17TH CENTURY BORE	6	6	30	
	17TH CENTURY OCC	CTP	PIPECLAY		PIPE	1640-60	2	2	28	
	17TH CENTURY OCC	CTP	PIPECLAY		PIPE	1640-60	2	2	18	
	17TH CENTURY OCC	CTP	PIPECLAY		PIPE	1640-60	3	3	23	
	17TH CENTURY OCC	CTP	PIPECLAY		PIPE	1640-60; STAMP ON HEEL	1	1	10	
	17TH CENTURY OCC	IRON	IRON		HOOK	LARGE HOOK WITH WALL ATTACHMENT	1	1	99	
	17TH CENTURY OCC	IRON	IRON		OBJECT	PART OF DECORATIVE IRONWORK??	1	1	36	
	17TH CENTURY OCC	PMGL	PMGL	DARK GREEN	BOT		1	1	13	
	17TH CENTURY OCC	POTTERY	HERB5		PANC		1	1	45	ABRA

trench	context	class	cname	subfabric	Form	Description	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Condition
	17TH CENTURY OCC	POTTERY	HERB4		JAR		1	1	15	
	17TH CENTURY OCC	POTTERY	HERB4		JAR		1	1	43	V ABRA
	17TH CENTURY OCC	POTTERY	HERB4		PANC		1	1	10	ABRA
	17TH CENTURY OCC	POTTERY	HERA7D		JUG		1	1	13	
	17TH CENTURY OCC	POTTERY	HERA7D	BLACK GLAZED	JUG		2	1	12	
	17TH CENTURY OCC	POTTERY	HERA7D		PANC		2	2	116	
	17TH CENTURY OCC	POTTERY	STSL		BOWL		1	1	4	
1	1 SPIT 5	POTTERY	RPOT	A1	?		1	1	15	V ABRA
1	101 SPIT 4	POTTERY	STSL		?		1	1	1	
1	103	FCLAY	FCLAY	MUSC;A AQ <0.1MM		BLACK;POSSIBLE TRACE OF WATTLE IMPR	2	2	2	V ABRA
1	103	FCLAY	FCLAY	MUSC;A AQ <0.1MM		OXID	1	1	3	V ABRA
10	10 SPIT 1	CBM	HERA10		BRICK?		1	1	2	

trench	context	class	cname	subfabric	Form	Description	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Condition
11	11 SPIT 1	POTTERY	HERB4		JUG	SLASHED STRAP HANDLE	1	1	5	
12	12 SPIT 2	CBM	HERB4		RIDGE		1	1	1	V ABRA
12	1200	POTTERY	RPOT	A1	BOWL		1	1	9	ABRA
12	1201	POTTERY	HERB4		JUG		4	3	42	V ABRA
12	1201	POTTERY	RPOT	A1	BOWL		1	1	6	
12 EXT2	12/2 SPIT 2	CBM	HERA10		BRICK		1	1	46	ABRA
12/EXT4	12/4 SPIT 1	POTTERY	HERA2		JAR		1	1	2	
12/EXT4	12/4 SPIT 2	POTTERY	HERB4		JUG		1	1	1	
15	15 SPIT 2	CBM	HERA10		BRICK		1	1	4	ABRA
15	15 SPIT 2	CBM	HERB4		RIDGE		1	1	6	ABRA
15	15 SPIT 2	POTTERY	CSTN		CUP		1	1	2	
16	16 SPIT 2	CBM	MODTIL		WALT	PALE MOTTLED PINK/BROWN FABRIC WITH CLEAR GLAZE	1	1	2	
16	16 SPIT 2	POTTERY	STRE		DISH		1	1	2	
2	201	POTTERY	HERB4		JAR		1	1	1	ABRA
2	201 SPIT 3	CBM	MODTIL		WALT	WHITE FABRIC WITH CLEAR GLAZE	1	1	1	
2	201 SPIT 3	CBM	MODTIL		WALT	WHITE FABRIC UNGLAZED	1	1	1	
2	201 SPIT 3	POTTERY	CREA		?		1	1	1	
3	3 SPIT 1	CBM	HERA10		BRICK?		2	2	1	
3	3 SPIT 1	CBM	HERA10		BRICK		1	1	24	
3	3 SPIT 1	CBM	MODTIL		?	WHITE FABRIC WITH WHITE GLAZE	1	1	1	
3	3 SPIT 1	CBM	MODTIL		WALT	WHITE FABRIC WITH CLEAR STAINED GLAZE	2	2	3	

trench	context	class	cname	subfabric	Form	Description	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Condition
3	3 SPIT 1	CBM	MODTIL		?	WHITE FABRIC WITH CREAM GLAZE	1	1	3	
3	3 SPIT 1	POTTERY	CREA		?		1	1	2	SHATTERED
3	3 SPIT 1	POTTERY	PEAR		?		1	1	1	
3	3 SPIT 1	POTTERY	STRE		DISH		2	2	2	
3	3 SPIT 2	CBM	HERA10		BRICK		2	2	7	
3	3 SPIT 2	CBM	MODTIL		WALT	WHITE FABRIC WITH CLEAR GLAZE	1	1	1	
4	4 SPIT 1	CBM	HERA10		BRICK?		2	2	2	ABRA
4	4 SPIT 1	CBM	MODTIL		WALT	WHITE FABRIC UNGLAZED	1	1	3	
4	4 SPIT 1	CBM	MODTIL		WALT?	WHITE FABRIC WITH WHITE GLAZE	1	1	1	
4	4 SPIT 2	CBM	HERA10		BRICK?		1	1	1	
4	401 SPIT 3	CBM	HERA10		BRICK?		3	3	7	
4	401 SPIT 3	POTTERY	STRE		PANC		1	1	4	ABRA
5	5 BELOW TOPSOIL	POTTERY	HERB4		DRIPPING DISH		1	1	3	ABRA
5	5 SPIT 1	CBM	HERA10		BRICK?		1	1	3	V ABRA
5	5 SPIT 1	CBM	HERB5		RIDGE?		1	1	11	V ABRA
5	501 SPIT 3	CBM	HERA10		BRICK		1	1	1	ABRA
5	501 SPIT 3	POTTERY	CSTN		CUP		1	1	8	ABRA
5	501 SPIT 3	POTTERY	RPOT	A1	?		1	1	2	V ABRA
5	501 SPIT 4	POTTERY	HERB1		JAR	E13 CENTURY	1	1	12	ABRA
5	501 SPIT 4	POTTERY	HERB1		JAR		5	1	17	ABRA
5	501 SPIT 4	POTTERY	HERB1		JAR	E13 CENTURY	1	1	17	ABRA

trench	context	class	cname	subfabric	Form	Description	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Condition
5	501 SPIT 4	POTTERY	RPOT	A1	?		3	3	14	V ABRA
5	501 SPIT 4	POTTERY	RPOT	A1	?		2	2	1	V ABRA
5 EXT 2	5/2 SPIT 1	CBM	HERB4		RIDGE		1	1	2	ABRA
5 EXT 2	5/2 SPIT 1	POTTERY	HERA7D		JAR		1	1	1	ABRA
5 EXT 2	5/2 SPIT 1	POTTERY	STRE		DISH		2	1	2	
5/EXT 2	5/2 SPIT 1	CBM	HERB4		RIDGE		1	1	2	ABRA
5/EXT 2	5/2 SPIT 1	POTTERY	HERA7D		JAR		1	1	1	ABRA
5/EXT 2	5/2 SPIT 1	POTTERY	STRE		DISH		2	1	2	
6	06 SPIT 2	POTTERY	CSTN		CUP		1	1	4	
6	06 SPIT 2	POTTERY	STRE		DISH		1	1	4	
6	06 SPIT 2	POTTERY	STRE		DISH	SLTR	1	1	11	
6	06 SPIT 2	POTTERY	RPOT	A1	?		1	1	1	V ABRA
6	6 SPIT 2	CBM	HERA10		BRICK		1	1	50	
6	6 SPIT 2	CBM	HERA10	MUDSTONE LUMPS	BRICK		2	2	27	V ABRA
6	601 SEE BAG	POTTERY	IAMALV		JAR		1	1	4	ABRA
6	601 SEE BAG	POTTERY	RPOT	A1	?		1	1	1	V ABRA
6	601 SPIT 4	POTTERY	HERB1		JAR		1	1	3	V ABRA
7	7 U/S SPIT 2	CBM	HERA10		BRICK		3	3	7	ABRA
7	7 U/S SPIT 2	POTTERY	STBRs		TANK		1	1	1	
7	7 U/S SPIT 2	POTTERY	STMO		JAR		1	1	6	
7	701	CBM	HERA10	MUDSTONE LUMPS	BRICK		3	1	19	V ABRA

trench	context	class	cname	subfabric	Form	Description	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Condition
7	701 SPIT 3	POTTERY	HERB3		JAR		1	1	2	
7	701 SPIT 3	POTTERY	GRE		BOWL	SHL= 701 TOP	1	1	4	
7	701 TOP	POTTERY	GRE		BOWL	SHL= 701 SPIT 3	1	1	7	
7	701 TOP	POTTERY	NOTS		TANK		1	1	2	
7	701 TOP	POTTERY	STRE		DISH		1	1	7	
8	8 U/S	CBM	HERA10		BRICK		2	1	6	ABRA
8	801 SPIT 3	CBM	HERA10		BRICK		2	1	1	V ABRA
9	9 U/S SPIT 1	CBM	MODTIL		WALT	WHITE MOTTLED FABRIC WITH CLEAR GLAZE	1	1	1	
9	9 U/S SPIT 1	POTTERY	PEAR		?		1	1	1	