

The Finds from the Heritage Upton Bishop Project, Herefordshire

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The Heritage Upton Bishop project, funded by the Local Heritage initiative, included the excavation of various test pits and trenches in Upton Bishop parish. The finds from these investigations include an almost complete loom weight dating between the later 7th and the early 10th centuries, the first find of such an object in Herefordshire outside of Hereford. No other pre-conquest finds were present, however. Pottery of later 11th to mid 12th-century date was present in small quantities and there were finds of late 13th to 15th century pottery from seven of the excavations. Early post-medieval finds (i.e. 16th or early 17th-century) were present in four excavations but there is then a gap until the later 18th and 19th centuries.

Description

Animal Bone

A small quantity of animal bone was recovered, all from the same trench (SH2). The bone includes a high proportion of teeth and this, together with the poor condition of the fragments, suggests that bone does not survive well in the local soil and that its absence from other trenches might be affected by soil conditions.

The bone is too fragmentary for identification and is in any case too small a sample for useful archaeozoological study.

Ceramic Building Material

Ceramic building material of medieval and later date was recovered from several trenches. The earliest material present consisted of ridge tiles. These tiles were V-sectioned, glazed and usually decorated along the crest in some way. Such tiles were sufficiently expensive to be mentioned in medieval building accounts and were usually produced by potters (flat roof tiles were not used in this part of the Welsh Marches until the 16th century. Tilers were, however, present at Worcester from a much earlier date, and formed their own guild).

The Upton Bishop ridge tiles are of three fabrics: Hereford Fabric A7B (HERA7B); Bristol Medieval Glazed ware (BR) and Gloucester TF110 (GLOS110). All three fabrics were used for pottery, examples of which were found in the trenches.

The Hereford Fabric A7B tiles were glazed either with plain lead glaze or with a copper-mottled lead glaze. The latter were sometimes fired so as to produce a black glaze and it is possible that this was deliberate, in order to have tiles of contrasting colours. Crest

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decoration consisted of a strip of clay added along the crest and cut with a knife into a cockscomb pattern. Sometimes, these crests were stabbed, to secure the added strip, but no stabbings were noted on the Upton Bishop examples. Although this fabric was undoubtedly produced at several centres, and Upton Bishop itself had a pottery industry in the post-medieval period, it is likely that the Upton Bishop tiles were made elsewhere, perhaps in the suburbs of Hereford, where pottery wasters have been found.

The Bristol tiles were all glazed with a copper-mottled glaze. A single decorated fragment was found. This had a single hand-formed knob at the crest, a style of ridge tile decoration which is more common in Worcestershire (Malvern Chase and Worcester, for example) and this raises the possibility that these tiles were not Bristol products but were made from a local source of light-firing clay.

A single example of a Gloucester TF110 ridge tile was found, although pottery in this fabric formed the majority of the medieval pottery found. Therefore, it is likely that ridge tiles were only rarely produced in this industry.

The remaining ceramic building material is all of post-medieval date and includes bricks and field drains. All were made in the same fabric, Hereford A10. The field drains are likely to be of 19th-century or later date and the bricks are undatable, although it is likely that they are no earlier than the later 17th century since before this date brick was not commonly used for building whole structures but for fireplaces, chimneys and panelling. The bricks used in the later 16th century at St Katherine's Chapel in Ledbury, for example, were purchased from Malvern Chase. Only when the demand for brick grew, in the late 17th century, did brick making spread to Herefordshire.

Fired Clay

Although several fragments of fired clay were recovered, most are too small and featureless for their date or function to be determined. Exceptions consist of a near-complete bun-shaped loom weight (and a possible sliver from this or a second weight and a third, rather dubious example) and a few fragments which appear to have wattle impressions and therefore come from burnt wattle and daub structures. All the fired clay has the same fabric, Hereford Fabric A10, and it is therefore impossible to reliably distinguish fragments of deliberately-fired brick from accidentally fired daub (or hearth lining) unless the fragment has two or more faces surviving.

The loom weight is an interesting and important find although it was found incorporated into a later wall. Circular loom weights were introduced to England in the 5th century, by Anglo-Saxon immigrants. These weights initially were formed of a ring of clay (the so-called doughnut form). During the 7th century, this form was replaced by weights with a smaller central hole and with one side wider and flatter than the other (the bun-shaped form). It seems that the warp-weighted loom was replaced by other types early in the late Saxon period (i.e. the late 9th or 10th century) and this weight therefore must date between the later

7th and the early 10th centuries. Examples of this type have been found at Gloucester and Hereford in late 9th/10th century contexts but this piece is the first known to the author from a rural site.

Glass

Two fragments of glass were recovered. One is a very small chip of window glass with a light green colour. Such glass was hardly used locally until the later 16th century, when glasshouses were set up in several centres (the nearest to Upton Bishop being at Newent Glasshouse). This type of glass was then used throughout the 17th century but was replaced at the end of the century by clearer glass (which was also more stable, and therefore survives better). This later glass has a slight blue tinge.

The second fragment comes from a clear glass bottle, probably of later 19th or 20th century date.

Iron

A few corroded nails were recovered and a fragment of a probable hinge (from a door, gate or possibly a large box). All were in poor condition and may well be of medieval date.

Pottery

Pottery was the most common find recovered from the trenches. No examples of 7th to 9th-century date were present and the likelihood is that at the time when the loom weight was in use there was very little pottery, if any, being used in the Upton Bishop area. In the late 11th and early 12th centuries pottery produced in the Vale of Gloucester was in use in Hereford, Eardisland, Croft Castle and Sutton St Nicholas. The simplest way for this pottery to have reached these sites was overland along the Gloucester to Hereford road. This route passed close to Upton Bishop and the lack of pottery of this type in the collections suggests that there was no occupation on the site in the later 11th or early 12th centuries (or, at least, no pottery was discarded in the areas investigated).

The earliest pottery found is of two types: Hereford Fabric A8, which contains coarse fragments of quartz and sandstone, and Stamford ware. The latter is a dubious identification of an unglazed jar bodysherd which has been burnt after breakage. Unglazed Stamford ware jars were used in Hereford in the 11th to mid 12th centuries whilst at Chepstow Hereford A8 vessels came into use some time after the Norman conquest, although possibly still within the 11th century. It is likely, therefore, that the earliest pottery found so far dates to the mid 12th century, although if the Stamford ware identification is discounted then a later 12th or even early 13th century date is possible.

The majority of the medieval pottery, however, probably dates to the later medieval period (i.e. the later 13th, 14th and possibly 15th centuries). The most common ware, by far, is Gloucester TF110. The distinctive sandstone temper, which is cemented with calcium

carbonate, is only found in pottery from sites in the Monmouth area, Goodrich Castle and Much Marcle (with stray vessels elsewhere) and a source close to Ross-on-Wye is likely. The vessels are mainly wheelthrown and include a few vessels with glaze. However, the majority of the sherds are from unglazed jars. Sherds from one or more curfews were present. This form had the shape of a large bowl, but was used inverted, with a handle on the top, as a cover to keep the embers of an open fire from sending out sparks after the fire has died down at night. Where this ware has been found stratified elsewhere it tends to be found in later medieval deposits but the evidence from the Upton Bishop sites suggests that its first use in the village pre-dates the use of late 13th- to 15th-century glazed wares and is instead contemporary with the HERA8 ware. This may, in turn, suggest that there not actually any evidence from these trenches for occupation prior to the 13th century.

The second most common ware was Bristol medieval glazed ware, most of the sherds of which came from jugs. None of the sherds had any of the distinctive features which only occur on Bristol vessels (such as bridge spouts shaped like human heads, or applied decoration in a dark red-firing clay, or wide slash-decorated strap handles) but none of the sherds would be out of place in a Bristol assemblage.

A few sherds of Malvern Chase glazed ware (HERB4) and a single Minety tripod pitcher or jug rim and strap handle complete the medieval assemblage. The Minety ware vessel has typological features which indicate a 13th- or 14th-century date, consistent with the other wares.

There are no specifically late medieval sherds in the collection (i.e. late 14th to early 16th century) although some of the medieval wares are of types which continued in use after the Black Death. Nevertheless, there does seem to be a hiatus in the pottery sequence and it is possible that the mid 14th century saw the shrinkage of the village.

The post-medieval period is represented by a handful of sherds of Welsh Borderland wares (Hereford Fabric A7D) and a single slip-decorated sherd which might be a Newent Glasshouse product (Hereford Fabric A7E). A single sherd of a Staffordshire redware cup is probably of early to mid 17th-century date. The Welsh Borderland ware sherds come from internally-glazed bowls and jars with a few sherds from cylindrical tankards glazed black inside and out. Such vessels were produced in a number of centres scattered throughout the Welsh Borderland. There was a production site in Upton Bishop itself. However, none of the sherds from the excavations have the distinctive light-coloured body of the Upton Bishop vessels. Apart from the kiln site, the products of the Upton Bishop kiln have been found in large numbers at Goodrich Castle, about 9 miles southwest of Upton Bishop. They appear there to have been part of a rubbish deposit associated with the use of the castle in the Civil War, suggesting that the pottery was in operation in the 1640s. The lack of Upton Bishop products in the excavations may indicate that the 17th-century pottery present is earlier or later than the period of operation of the kiln.

No sherds of definite late 17th to mid 18th-century date were present, and there is a scatter of later 18th-century or later sherds, all of which were factory products. No examples from the pottery at Coleford (about 16 miles to the south southwest of Upton Bishop) were present. This pottery produced glazed red earthenwares, unglazed flowerpots and ceramic building material.

Stone

A few fragments of micaceous siltstone were present, probably because of their similarity in appearance to potsherds, such siltstone could have been used as roofing although there is nothing to suggest that the present pieces were used by man. They are visually similar to the Silurian sandstones which outcrop at several places in the county. A single flint blade, of earlier prehistoric date, was found on the surface of SH3 and a fine-grained sandstone hone stone, with wear on three faces, was also found in SH3.

Fragments of coal, burnt organic shale and burnt mudstone were recovered from several trenches (). All were from deposits which also produced late 18th-century and later finds and it is likely that this coal comes from early modern domestic fires rather than being associated with iron working.

Wood

A few fragments of charcoal were recovered. They come from round wood branches, 20-30mm in diameter, and were probably deliberately made charcoal rather than accidentally-charred kindling from a domestic fire. The most obvious function of this charcoal would be iron working activity (the trenches produced over 20Kg of iron slag). A C14 date for the charcoal would therefore provide an indirect date for the iron working.

Assessment

Test Pits

Twelve test pits were dug, T1 to T4 were located to the southwest of the church, and produced no finds. T5 to T11 were located to the northwest of the church and T12 was located to the southeast of the church.

T5

Finds were recovered from topsoil and context 034 (context 035 produced a fragment of unworked stone). The finds consist of 19th-century pottery.

T6

Fragments of coal and burnt coal measures shale were recovered from the fill of a rectangular posthole, 039. They cannot be closely dated.

T7

A bag of finds was recorded as coming from T7, but without either a spit or context number. The finds consist of field drain and a pearlware plate and are probably of 19th-century date.

T8

Finds were recovered from contexts 022 and 023. In both contexts, the main finds were fragments of medieval ridge tile. However, other finds from the same contexts date to the later 16th century or later: Post-medieval Welsh Borderland wares; Malvern Chase wares and a fragment of brick.

These finds suggest the presence of a medieval building but perhaps one still standing into the late 16th century or later.

T9

Finds were recovered from context 024. They are similar to those from T8 (i.e. a medieval ridge tile and 16th-/17th-century pottery. The only possibly later find is a possible fragment of field drain.

T10

Finds were recovered from contexts 028 and 029. Context 028 produced ridge tile fragments, of three different fabrics, whilst context 029 produced a mixture of medieval and later pottery. The latest types present in context 029 are of 19th-century date.

T11

A fragment of medieval ridge tile and 19th-century or later field drain were recovered from context 033.

T12

Fragments of medieval, post-medieval and late 18th-century or later pottery were recovered from context 1002, together with a fragment of brick.

Trenches

Tr 1 (2004)

Finds were recovered from topsoil and contexts 006 and 104. All the datable finds were later 13th- to 15th-century in date. They include ridge tiles, an iron nail and fired clay fragments.

SH1

Finds were recovered from three spits. Spit 4 produced a sherd of Hereford A8 jar and the putative Stamford ware jar, together with fragments of iron slag. Spit 3 produced a collection of medieval pottery of later 13th to 15th-century date, an iron nail (possibly a fiddle key nail

from a horseshoe) and three fragments of slag. Spit 1 produced a similar assemblage, together with one fragment of medieval ridge tile and a fragment of transfer printed ware, of later 18th or 19th-century date.

This trench is the only one in which finds which could be 12th-century in date were found without any later types. However, the evidence for this is very weak – one putatively-identified Stamford ware jar and a sherd of a type which was still used in the 13th century. However, there is no doubt that 13th to 15th-century occupation was present on the site.

SH2

Finds were recovered from spits 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8, as well as from a wall found at the lowest level in the trench. In addition one bag was marked “SH2 spit”, and might come from the otherwise unrepresented spit 2. The wall produced the mid to late Saxon loomweight. Spits 9 to 6 produced a similar range of pottery, dating to the 13th- to 15th-centuries. Spit 5 produced sherds of Hereford A7B jug and Spit 4 produced the Minety ware sherd, both of which confirm the later 13th-century date. Spit 1 is the only spit to produce later finds: a sherd of Tudor Green ware (15th or 16th century) and a sherd of Creamware. SH2 is the only trench from which animal bone was recovered.

SH3

Finds were recovered from the surface of SH3 and from spits 1, 2 and 3. Spit 3 produced a sherd of HERA7D tankard, which is either intrusive or dates the deposition of the spit to the later 16th to mid 17th century or later. The remaining sherds from this spit are of 13th to 15th century date, as are the potsherds from spit 2. Spit 1 produced 19th-century sherds. The surface finds include a prehistoric flint blade. Other finds from this trench include fired clay (including a possible spall from the surface of a loom weight); slag; a fine-grained sandstone hone; coal and charcoal.

SH4

Finds were recovered from spits 1, 2 and 3 in SH4. Those from spit 3 include a Staffordshire redware cup sherd which dates, at the earliest, to the early to mid 17th century. Those from spit 2 include a Malvern Chase glazed ware jug sherd (HERB4) which is definitely no later than the early 17th century and quite likely no later than the mid 16th century. A sherd of transfer-printed ware was recovered from spit 1. Single sherds of medieval date (HERA8) were recovered from spits 2 and 3. Other finds include daub, coal, a fragment of ceramic building material, and slate (from spit 1).

Distribution of finds

The earliest datable artefact is the loom weight which, as noted above, almost certainly dates between the later 7th and the early 10th centuries. It was found built into a wall, revealed at the base of the SH2 trench. This wall is immediately overlain by deposits which produced

13th to 15th-century pottery and is most likely of this date rather than being Anglo-Saxon. Nevertheless, the weight shows no sign of weathering and presumably came from Anglo-Saxon occupation layers nearby. Possible further fragments of loom weight were found in SH2 and SH3.

The next group of finds consists of pottery of two fabrics: HERA8 and STAM. These sherds, came from SH1 to SH4 and Tr 1 2004, i.e. to both sides of the road, close to the church. Sherds of GLOS110 have a very similar distribution, with the exception of a single sherd from T10, which is also close to the church, on the north side of the road. These sherds indicate that medieval occupation dating to the 12th or earlier 13th centuries existed to the south and north of the church.

The next group consists of later 13th-century and later glazed wares and ridge tiles. There is a difference in the distribution of the pottery and ridge tiles, which may indicate, as suggested above, that the ridge tiles were only discarded in the post-medieval period, or even that the medieval ridge tiles were re-used on post-medieval structures situated in areas not occupied in the 13th to 15th-century. However, there are some finds of 13th- to 15th-century pottery from most of the trenches which produced ridge tiles (Tr 1 2004 and T11 being the exceptions). The excavators suggest plausibly that these finds indicate the location of the manor house, demolished and its rubble used as a base on which was carried out post-medieval iron-working. The finds of ridge tile in SH1, to the south of the road, suggest that this putative manor house was not the only building in the village to have ceramic ridge tiles on its roof whilst the presence of scraps of tile on other sites in the north field, to the west of the church, do suggest that this was the probable location of a manor house.

Table 1

Trench	CBM	POTTERY	Grand Total
SH1	2	4	6
SH2		15	15
SH3		4	4
SH4		1	1
Tr 1 2004	3		3
T08	59	5	64
T09	1	2	3
T10	3	1	4
T11	1		1
T12		1	1
Grand Total	69	33	102

Pottery of the 16th- and 17th-centuries, window glass and ceramic building material (brick fragments) have a more limited distribution (Table 2). The finds are present, but not numerous, in the area of post-medieval rubble previously mentioned, and this would be consistent with the interpretation of the area as a post-medieval iron working site rather than domestic occupation. The quantity of finds from the trenches south of the road is very low

indeed (3 potsherds and a fragment of brick) and it is unlikely that this area was occupied in the post-medieval period.

Table 2

trench	CBM	POTTERY	GLASS	Grand Total
SH2		1	1	2
SH3		1		1
SH4	1	1		2
T08	1	6		7
T09		1		1
T10		3		3
T12	1	2		3
Grand Total	3	15	1	19

Datable late 18th and 19th-century finds (consisting of fragments of field drain, coal, glass and pottery) occur as a scatter in most trenches but there is a difference in distribution of the pottery, coal and ceramic building material: the field drain fragments come from trenches T7, 8, 9 and 11 whereas most of the pottery comes from trenches SH1, 2, 3 and 4, which is also true for the coal (the exceptions come from the fill of a posthole in T6).

Table 3

trench	CBM	POTTERY	GLASS	COAL/BURNT SHALES ETC	Grand Total
SH1		1			1
SH2		1	1	3	5
SH3		2		8	10
SH4		1		5	6
T05		4			4
T06				6	6
T07	3	1			4
T08	1				1
T09	1				1
T10		2			2
T11	2				2
T12		1			1
Grand Total	7	13	1	22	43

Pottery Supply in Upton Bishop

The pottery from these archaeological investigations provides considerable new information about the use and distribution of pottery in the Upton Bishop area between the pre-conquest period (which appears to have been aceramic) and the 17th century. The sequence differs from that found at Hereford, Much Cowarne and Whitbourne and is more similar to that found at Monmouth and Goodrich Castle. This suggests that from the 12th/13th century until the 15th century the pottery supply to Upton Bishop relied mainly on local sources, or sources located to the south and southwest of the village. The most likely immediate source of supply would be Ross-on-Wye. Whether the two main early medieval wares found in this collection (HERA8 and GLOS110) are actually from the same sources as those seen at Monmouth and elsewhere or simply have a very similar appearance but were made from different outcrops

of clay and sand is not clear from a visual examination. The high proportion of Bristol-made pottery is also worthy of further investigation, since the frequency seen in this collection is much higher than the frequency of non-local pottery found at other rural sites in Herefordshire. However, it may simply be due to the proximity of the village to Ross and the river Wye. Contemporary documents confirm that water transport was considerably cheaper than overland in the medieval period.

In the 16th century, however, the types of pottery used are similar to those found elsewhere in the county: Malvern Chase; Cistercian ware from unknown sources; Tudor Green ware, from the Surrey/Hampshire border. Later, during the later 16th to mid 17th centuries, Malvern Chase ware gave way to locally-made Welsh Borderland wares, although there is no proof that any of those found in the excavations were produced at the Upton Bishop pottery. This is likely to be due to a difference in date since it is known that the Upton Bishop pottery was supplying sites some distance from the village and it would be remarkable if its products were not used by the villagers themselves. Unfortunately, later 17th-century and later ceramics are rare in the collection and cannot be used to extend this sequence to the late 18th century, by which time factory products were the main, if not the only, source of pottery in the village.

Further Work

Despite the small size of the assemblages, the Heritage Upton Bishop pottery and ceramic building material has been very revealing and would repay further work. This work should include the illustration of several vessels and tiles (Table 4) and the analysis of the fabric of the three main medieval wares (Table 5). The results of this analysis could be published online or in a local archaeological journal.

The illustrations would be produced in Lincoln under the supervision of AVAC, probably by Charlotte Bentley of Network Archaeology Ltd.

Table 4

trench	Context	class	cname	Description	Form
SH1	SPIT 1	POTTERY	GLOS110		JAR
SH3	SPIT 3	POTTERY	GLOS110	EVERTED, THICKENED INT AND EXT	JAR
Tr 1 2004	006	CBM	BR	CUGL;HAND-FORMED CREST	RIDGE
Tr 1 2004	TOPSOIL	POTTERY	HERA8		JAR
SH2	SPIT10	FCLAY	HERA10		LOOMWEIGHT

Thin sections of the items listed in table 5 would be produced by Steve Caldwell of the University of Manchester and analysed in Lincoln. A technical report would be produced and archived on the AVAC website and the results summarised and placed in their regional context in a report which could be published (in print or online) in Herefordshire. Samples of supposed Bristol medieval ware jugs and ridge tiles; Gloucester TF110 jars and a ridge tile;

fired clay daub and loomweights and Hereford Fabric A8 jars would be studied and compared with thin sections of samples from various local sites.

The same samples would then be analysed at Royal Holloway College, London, using inductively-coupled plasma spectroscopic analysis (ICP-AES). This work would be undertaken under the supervision of Dr J N Walsh. The results, consisting of the percent oxides of nine major elements (Al₂O₃, Fe₂O₃, MgO, CaO, Na₂O, K₂O, TiO₂, P₂O₅ and MnO) and 20 minor and trace elements (Ba, Cr, Cu, Li, Ni, Sc, Sr, V, Y, Zr*, La, Ce, Nd, Sm, Eu, Dy, Yb, Zn, Co and Pb) would be archived online and analysed using multivariate statistics to determine whether the fabrics could be distinguished by their chemical composition; whether the ridge tiles are distinguishable from the pottery made in the same fabrics and whether there are any similarities between these fabrics and other analysed wares.

Table 5

trench	Context	class	cname	Description	Form
SH1	SPIT 1	CBM	BR		RIDGE
SH1	SPIT 1	FCLAY	HERA10	WATTLE IMPR OR BUN-SHAPED LOOMWEIGHT	DAUB?
SH1	SPIT 1	POTTERY	GLOS110		JAR
SH1	SPIT 3	POTTERY	BR		JUG
SH2	SPIT	POTTERY	GLOS110		JAR
SH2	SPIT 4	POTTERY	HERA8		JAR
SH2	SPIT 5	FCLAY	HERA10	WATTLE IMPRESSION?	DAUB
SH2	SPIT 5	POTTERY	HERA8		JAR
SH2	SPIT 6	FCLAY	HERA10		LOOMWEIGHT?
SH2	SPIT 8	POTTERY	GLOS110	APPLIED THUMBED STRIP ON TOP OF LID	CURF
SH2	SPIT10	FCLAY	HERA10		LOOMWEIGHT
SH3	SPIT 2	FCLAY	HERA10		
SH3	SPIT 2	FCLAY	HERA10	FLAT SURFACE	
SH3	SPIT 3	POTTERY	GLOS110	EVERTED, THICKENED INT AND EXT	JAR
SH3	SPIT 3	POTTERY	BR		JUG
SH4	SPIT 3	FCLAY	HERA10	WATTLE IMPR?	DAUB
T08	022	CBM	BR		RIDGE
T08	022	POTTERY	BR		JUG
T08	023	CBM	BR	CUGL	RIDGE
T08	023	POTTERY	BR		JUG
T10	028	CBM	BR		RIDGE
T11	033	CBM	BR	CUGL	RIDGE
Tr 1 2004	006	CBM	BR	CUGL;HAND-FORMED CREST	RIDGE
Tr 1 2004	104	POTTERY	GLOS110	WAVY GROOVES EXT	BOWL/CURF
Tr 1 2004	TOPSOIL	CBM	GLOS110		RIDGE

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TOPSOIL	POTTERY	HERA8
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JAR