

Enhancing the Worcestershire on-line ceramic reference resource

As part of its *Improving Sector Reference Resources* initiative, Historic England has commissioned Worcestershire County Council Archive & Archaeology Service to undertake the further enhancement of the Worcestershire on-line ceramic reference resource (www.worcestershireceramics.org).

This Project derives from the need to have access to reference material for the classification and structured recording of archaeological material. This especially applies to pottery which has always played a major role in the dating and interpretation of archaeological sites and in establishing their wider context (ie socio-economic links). Such reference resources are now playing a more central role in addressing other aspects of archaeological practice such as ensuring the research dividend can be efficiently realised and, in the future, will also potentially contribute towards assisting museums in addressing storage capacity issues.

In Worcestershire (and the Severn valley generally) there has been a long tradition of ceramic research first pioneered by David Peacock and Alan Vince, and then incorporated into the work of, and further developed by, the local unit (Morris 1980; Hurst and Rees 1992; Bryant 2004). So integral is this to archaeological work in Worcestershire that since 2003, when www.worcestershireceramics.org went on-line, all developer-funded projects within the county must either use the fabric series, or produce a concordance table linking it with other regional/national fabric series. The intention is to now develop this website beyond its primary focus on fabric towards the presentation of associated forms, and to create links with other fabric series in the region, which will extend its usefulness into the wider region.

Specifically the Project aims to:

- a) develop an on-line model for linking local fabric series at a regional/national level
- b) develop an on-line form series for local medieval fabric groups linked to published reports (whether traditional and/or on-line) and 'grey literature'.
- c) add the main fabric and form groups for the later post-medieval period.
- d) develop a pilot project to promote the use of on-line typologies within the development control environment.
- e) develop the potential of ceramic reference series to assist in addressing issues faced by museums, especially in terms of the future of storage capacity and its most sustainable use.

Therefore, apart from routine pottery recording, other exciting possibilities could then come within reach, such as manipulating and presenting the data for large areas and readily contextualising new fieldwork projects, as well as enabling new regional research to be carried out more easily. This will also overcome the present barrier to such research where this material has been previously omitted due to its largely unsystematic recording and the absence of concordances. This project could be an important step towards the establishment of a dynamic ceramics dataset being created within HERs, so displaying the current state of knowledge of this material on a constant and accessible basis, thereby also maximising its value for a range of users.

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References

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