

## **8. Medieval to Post-Medieval (1066-1900)**

### **8.1 Summary of the Collections**

#### **8.1.1 Archaeology**

By far the most significant assemblage of Medieval material in the Museum's collections is that excavated by Peter Addyman and his students between 1964 and 1972 at Ludgershall Castle (Ellis 2000). These excavations produced a varied, well-preserved and well-recorded finds assemblage which includes architectural fragments, fixtures and fittings, dress accessories and an exceptionally well-preserved assemblage of vessel and painted-window glass. Significantly, the excavations produced a huge assemblage of 47,000 sherds (570kg) of pottery, with the assemblage dating from the tenth century to the end of the medieval period and beyond. The ceramics are dominated by local coarse wares, but fabrics from across Wiltshire are represented, although imports are relatively rare. In addition to the ceramics and wider finds assemblage, the Museum also holds a substantial collection of animal remains from Ludgershall Castle, although these were not discussed in the eventual publication of the site. It must also be noted that the museum does not hold the complete archive, which is divided between the Wiltshire Museum and Historic England.

The Museum holds two significant comparably dated assemblages, although in neither case is the scale comparable to that at Ludgershall. The first was excavated at Chapel Meadow, Ramsbury (also referred to as Membury), by Grimes in 1941. The excavations have never been published, but revealed a complex of building foundations beginning in the twelfth century and originally interpreted as a

castle (Grimes in O'Neill 1948), but now thought to represent a fortified manorial site (Creighton 2000). Around 9,000 ceramic sherds are held by the Museum, with a relatively small collection of small finds and animal bone also attributed to the site. Grimes' site records are still held by the Museum, and an attempt was made by Hilary Heally to publish the site in the 1990s, although she sadly passed away prior to the project's completion. The second assemblage was excavated by Thompson at Huish parish church, and in the field immediately to the north (Thompson 1967; 1972). These excavations revealed evidence of buildings and workshops dating to the twelfth to fifteenth centuries and produced a stratified assemblage of c.1000 sherds as well as an interesting collection of ironwork and other finds, including multiple tools, locks and keys, and a well-preserved steelyard weight and balance arm with surviving mechanism (Shortt 1968). The original site records were similarly reportedly deposited with the Museum (Thompson 1972), although they have not been located at the time of writing.

Other assemblages dating to the Medieval period mostly comprise of small collections of material, largely derived from small-scale excavations and evaluations from within modern settlements. Such sites include: Wooton Bassett High Street (Currie 1995), Postern Mill (Currie 1993) and the Old Cinema (Hart and Holbrook 2011), both Malmesbury. The excavations at New Park Street, Devizes, by UCL (Russell 1993) uncovered just 300 medieval ceramic sherds, from badly disturbed deposits, however the site represents the Museum's principal collection of Post-Medieval ceramics, with c.1200 sherds attributed to this phase. The assemblage from this site is otherwise fairly limited. Additionally, the Museum holds a

relatively large quantity of material from various excavations around Cricklade carried out during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, where the ceramic sequence probably dates to the ninth to thirteenth centuries. Aside from the Late Saxon ceramics (Jope in Radford 1972), the pottery has never been discussed in detail, and indeed does not appear to have been retained in the case of Haslam's 1975 excavations. An assemblage of metalwork attributed to the latter excavation was not described as part of the eventual publication (Haslam 2003).

In addition to the settlement evidence, the museum also holds the archives from the excavations of two Medieval or Post-Medieval tile kilns. The first, and more significant, site is that from the Naish Hill Kilns (also called Nash Hill), near Lacock (McCarthy et al. 1974). These excavations revealed a stratified sequence of tile and pottery kilns dating to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and recovered an assemblage of over 9,000 pottery sherds. The assemblage includes an exceptional dragon-decorated jug, as well as a large assemblage of both decorated and undecorated tiles, and more utilitarian pottery. At the time of excavation, the British Museum attempted to scientifically link the tiles to those from Stanley Abbey, but their results were inconclusive. Stamps from the kiln are present at both Stanley and Lacock Abbeys, whereas some of the tiles produced at Naish Hill have no local parallels, but are recognised at sites such as Glastonbury Abbey. By contrast, the non-ceramic finds assemblage was described by the excavator as 'meagre in the extreme' and was mostly unstratified (McCarthy et al. 1974: 106); it doesn't appear to have been retained.

A second kiln site, as well as associated buildings, was excavated at Langley Burrell, Chippenham, by Dr. Ron Wilcox and Chippenham Technical College students in 1978-

9 (HER: ST97NW459). These excavations produced an extremely large assemblage of artefacts which are now in the Museum's collections, although the site has never been published and the finds have never been described or even given basic quantification. The assemblage includes a large quantity of pottery relating to the kilns, but also a wider assemblage of animal bone, small finds, worked flint and iron working debris. Vince (1984) has briefly described the fabric and suggests that the kilns can be dated to the late fifteenth to early sixteenth century based on analogy with the nearby Musty industry, although he also notes a mid/late-fourteenth century archaeomagnetic date from one of the kilns, and suggests that many of the forms from Langley Burrell are known in other fabrics from the fourteenth century. Unfortunately, no original records from the excavation survive in either the Wiltshire Museum or Historic Environment Record archive (although some material may be present within the Chippenham Museum).

The Museum also holds a small representative sample of material attributed to the Minety Kilns, although the majority of material from Musty's (1973) excavations are now in the collections of Swindon Museum and Art Gallery. The identification of a 'kiln' at Hunt's Mill, Wootton Bassett, based on a small assemblage of sherds found in the late nineteenth century is described as dubious by Vince (1984).

#### 8.1.2 Human remains

The Museum holds only an extremely limited collection of Medieval and Post-Medieval human remains, from just two of poorly dated chance finds. They are noted due to their potential to contribute to studies of Medieval

health. The first, from Spittlefield, Marlborough, was buried in a stone coffin and may relate to a fourteenth century leper hospital on the same site (Annable 1965), the second is a group of at least five individuals buried ‘without special care’ in a trench in Ramsbury (Burchard 1966).

## 8.2 Research summary

### 8.2.1 Summary

The research output generated by the Medieval and Post-Medieval Collections since 2010 has been relatively minor, and has predominantly focused on individual objects: A seventeenth century trade token issued by Thomas Walford of Kingswood (prior to 1844, a detached part of Wiltshire) was photographed for a catalogue of Gloucestershire tokens (Frith et al. 2022), a Post-Medieval copper alloy Reißscheiben ingot was described as a parallel for a recent metal-detector find (Martinón-Torres et al. 2018) and a curb-bit from Ludgershall Castle has recently been described in greater detail by Clarke (2020). A detailed re-examination of the funerary achievement of Sir Thomas Long, acquired from Draycott Cerne Church, Sutton Benger, has greatly improved our understanding of the group’s production and date, but also revealed that one is a rare and important survival of a fifteenth century Milanese armet, which is unlikely to have originally been part of the achievement (Dobson *in prep.*).

In addition to these projects, ceramics from the Naish Hill Kiln have been sampled for chemical analysis by Cotswold Archaeology in order to confirm whether the kilns are a source for a ceramic fabric identified on an archaeological site in Bristol (Gutierrez pers. comm.).

### 8.2.2 Research projects and publications

Clark, J. (2020) Curbing Horsepower: The Archaeology of Curb Bits in Medieval England – and Elsewhere, *The Horse in Premodern European Culture, Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Culture* 70, 177-192.

Dobson, C. (*in prep.*) Funerary Achievement, St James’ Church, Draycot Cerne.

Frith, B., Gray, I., Rhodes, J., Neufville Taylor, J., Thompson, R. and Everson, T. (2022) Gloucestershire Seventeenth-century tokens, Powys: Galata.

Martinón-Torres, M., Benzonelli, A., Stos-Gale, Z., and Henry, R. (2018) Argentiferous copper extraction and post-medieval metals trade: identification and origins of postmedieval Reißscheiben ingots found in Wiltshire, England *Historical Metallurgy* 52, 38-47.

## 8.3 Research priorities

Similar to the Late Iron Age and Roman collections (6.3), the disparate nature of the Medieval and Post-Medieval collections makes identifying a coherent scheme of research priorities difficult.

The key priorities would be projects that would lead to the publication of site assemblages, or elements thereof, which have previously received no attention. The archive associated with Grime’s excavation at Membury, for instance, requires description, as does the animal bone assemblage from Ludgershall Castle. As the recent research by Clarke (2020) demonstrates, the exceptional finds assemblage from Ludgershall, as well as from Huish, should also be able to contribute to research into

Medieval material culture, and the Museum would like to encourage such projects.

The most obvious resource from the Medieval collections is the substantial and well stratified ceramic assemblage from Ludgershall Castle, complemented by assemblages from Huish, Membury, Naish Hill, and other, smaller, excavations. Together, with the ceramics from the Langley Burrell and Minety Kilns, these assemblages cover the entirety of the Medieval period, as well as the Late Saxon and Post-Medieval periods, and thus provide an excellent opportunity to produce a Wiltshire Medieval fabric type series. Historic England currently provides funding for the creation of a similar type series in Somerset (SWHT 2021) and the Museum would proactively encourage projects which may lead to the creation of such a resource which would become a valuable resource for researchers and professional archaeologists alike, as well as firmly embedding the Museum's collections within regional archaeological research for the period.

A similar study could be constructed around the Museum's collection of encaustic tiles from Naish Hill and Ludgershall Castle, supplemented by other tiles in the collections from sites such as Langley Burrell, Stanley Abbey, Bradenstoke Priory and Malmesbury Abbey. Whilst unspecified tests to chemically link tiles from Naish Hill and Stanley Abbey reported in the initial publication were inconclusive (McCarthy *et al.* 1974), a study modelled on Warry's (2021) recent work with Romano-British tiles in the Exeter region may be valuable. Warry used 'broad-brush' pXRF testing in combination with more traditional typological and limited thin-section analysis to differentiate between the products of contemporary kilns in close geographic proximity. In addition to potentially differentiating between different tile-sources, if not necessarily provenancing them all, such a project would also act as a further test case for Warry's methodology, as there are serious limitations in the precision and suitability of pXRF for provenancing ceramics (Hunt and Speakman 2015). Such a study would be at an appropriate scale for a Masters-level project.