

## Pottery Identification Guide

### PREHISTORIC



#### BRONZE AGE (1200 – 800BC)

Dark grey-brown coarse fabric, large flint inclusions, unglazed and hand-made into simple pots with thick uneven forms.



#### MIDDLE IRON AGE SHELLY WARE (300 – 200BC)

Soft, grey-brown fabric, large shell inclusions, unglazed but sometimes

covered in vertical cut lines, giving it the name 'Scored Ware'. Hand-made into thick uneven forms.



#### EARLY IRON AGE (800 – 500BC)

Dark grey-brown coarse fabric, small flint and sand inclusions, unglazed and hand-made into

simple pots with thick uneven forms.



#### LATE IRON AGE BELGIC (50BC – 50AD)

Soft grey-brown fabric, fine inclusions, burnished finish and wheel-made into distinctive

pedestal-shaped forms. So-called because it was originally thought to have been made by members of an Iron Age people called the Belgae who were thought to have fled from France to Britain when the Romans invaded. It is the first prehistoric pottery to have been thrown on a proper potter's wheel and fired in a kiln rather than a bonfire.



#### ROMAN SAMIAN WARE (1<sup>st</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> Century AD)

Hard shiny red fabric, fine-grained, glossy-slip with moulded relief decoration into a wide range of relatively expensive fine

tableware including bowls and cups. Made in various parts of France, and imported all over Europe and North Africa.

### ROMAN



#### ROMAN GREYWARE (1<sup>st</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> Century AD)

Light grey to black burnished fabric, little or no decoration and describes various

forms of locally produced pottery for cooking and storage.



#### COLOUR COATED WARE (1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> Century AD)

Orange fabric, sometimes with a grey core and a shiny black or bronze surface, frequently rouletted or

stamped with decoration and formed into beakers with side indentations.



#### MORTARIA (1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> Century AD)

Light grey fabric with coarse internal grit to aid grinding, formed into large thick-walled and rolled rim bowls for food preparation.

## ANGLO-SAXON



### EARLY SAXON HAND TEMPERED WARE (450 700AD)

Colours range from black to red, to grey and to brown, dependent on firing, and used an organic temper leaving outlines of seeds and grass in the clay. Most people probably made their own pottery of this type, dug from clay close to where they lived and fired in bonfires. Pots were unglazed and made into simple forms such as jars and bowls, but some, usually used as cremation urns, were decorated with stamps and scored linear patterns.



### MIDDLE SAXON IPSWICH WARE (720 – 850AD)

Grey smooth fabric with varying amounts of large sand grains, unglazed but often with

decoration scratched into the outside surface. Very thick and heavy when compared to later Saxon pottery, probably because it was made by hand rather than thrown on a wheel. The first industrially produced pottery to be made after the end of the Roman period. Made in Ipswich, and fired in kilns, some of which have been excavated. Most pots were jars, but bowls are also known, as are jugs.



### LATE SAXON THETFORD WARE (850 – 1100AD)

Hard light grey fabric containing lots of fine sand, making the

surface feel like fine sandpaper. So-called because archaeologists first found it in Thetford, but the first place to make it was Ipswich. Pots were unglazed and most were simple jars, but very large storage pots over a metre high were also made, along with jugs and lamps.



### LATE SAXON ST NEOTS WARE (900 – 1200AD)

Soft and black, purplish-black or grey in colour with finely crushed fossil shells,

giving them a white speckled appearance. Unglazed and decorated with rouletting or thumbled strips, typically formed into small jars or bowls.



### LATE SAXON STAMFORD WARE (850 – 1150AD)

Hard, white to pinky-buff or pale grey fabric, and the first glazed pottery in

England, usually a translucent yellow or pale green. Made into good quality vessels which were quite thin-walled and smooth such as jugs with handles and a spout.



### EARLY MEDIEVAL GRIMSTON WARE (1080 – 1400AD)

The clay is usually a dark bluish-grey colour, sometimes with a light-coloured buff or orange inner surface. It was made from sandy clay giving it a fine sandpaper texture. All sorts of different pots were made, but the most common finds are jugs. The earliest pottery would have been unglazed but later

vessels usually had a slightly dull green glaze on the outer surface. Some were very ornate sometimes with attached models of knights in armour or grotesque faces to the outside of the pots, and less often found in the countryside than in towns.

## MEDIEVAL



### EARLY MEDIEVAL SANDY WARE (1100 – 1400 AD)

Hard grey-brown fabric with a plentiful quartz temper, and made into cooking pots but bowls and occasionally jugs are also known.



### EARLY MEDIEVAL SHELLY WARE (1100 – 1400AD)

Hard grey-brown fabric with a lot of small pieces of fossil shell in it, giving the pots a speckled appearance. Sometimes, in

acid soils, the shell dissolves, giving the sherds a texture like cork. Mainly cooking pots, although bowls and jugs were also made.



**EARLY MEDIEVAL  
HEDINGHAM WARE**  
(Late 12<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup>  
Century AD)

Fine orange or red fabric and a sparkly appearance to the surface due to

there being large quantities of mica, a glassy mineral, in the clay. Usually made into glazed pots.



**LATE MEDIEVAL  
TUDOR GREEN  
WARE**  
(1380 – 1600AD)

Very fine, thin white pottery with a bright green

glaze. Mainly tablewares such as mugs, cups and drinking bowls, and also small jugs. Common in towns, but rare in the countryside, where only the richer inhabitants probably used it.



**LATE MEDIEVAL  
OXIDISED WARE**  
(1450 – 1500AD)

Hard orange-red sandy ware, made mainly into simple vessels such as jugs and large bowls.



**GERMAN  
STONEWARE**  
(1450AD onwards)

Very hard grey fabric, with the outer surface of the pot often having a mottled brown glaze.

Made at lots of places along the river Rhine and the most common vessel type was the mug.

**POST-MEDIEVAL**



**BOURNE 'D' WARE**  
(1450 – 1637AD)

Fairly hard, smooth brick-red clay body, often with a grey core. Some vessels have sparse white flecks of shell and chalk in the clay. Vessels were often painted with

thin, patchy white liquid clay ('slip'), over which a clear glaze was applied and formed usually into jugs, large bowls and cisterns, for brewing beer.



**CISTERCIAN  
WARE**  
(1475 – 1700AD)

Usually brick red or purple, and covered with a dark brown or purplish-black glaze on both surfaces. The pots are very thin and

hard, as they were made in the first coal-fired pottery kilns, which reached much higher temperatures than the wood-fired types of the medieval period. So-called because it was first found during the excavation of Cistercian monasteries, but not made by monks. The main type of pot was small drinking cups with up to six handles, known as 'tygs'. They were sometimes decorated with painted dots and other designs in yellow clay.



**GLAZED RED  
EARTHENWARE**  
(Mid 16<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup>  
Century AD)

The clay fabric is usually very smooth, and a brick red colour. Lots of different types of pots

were made, particularly very large bowls, cooking pots and cauldrons. Almost all of them have shiny, good-quality orange, green or clear glaze on the inner surface, and sometimes on the outside as well. Sherds whose glaze has worn off can look quite like modern flowerpots!



**HARLOW  
SLIPWARE**  
(1600 – 1700AD)

The clay fabric is usually very smooth, and a brick red colour. The main difference

to Glazed Red Earthenware being the painted designs in yellow liquid clay ('slip') under the glaze.



**TIN-GLAZED EARTHENWARE (1600 – 1800 AD)**

Fine white earthenware, occasionally pinkish or yellowish core. Has a thick white tin glaze, with painted cobalt blue or polychrome

decoration and made into a range of table and display wares such as mugs, plates, dishes, bowls and vases.



**DELFT WARE (1600 – 1800 AD)**

Soft, cream coloured fabric with a thick white glaze, often with painted designs in blue, purple and

yellow. The first white pottery to be made in Britain, and named after the famed potteries of Holland. The 17<sup>th</sup> century pots were expensive table wares such as dishes or bowls, but by the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was considered very cheap and the main types of pot were such as chamber pots and ointment jars.



**STAFFORDSHIRE MANGANESE WARE (1640 – 1750AD)**

Made from a fine, buff-coloured clay, with the pots usually covered with a mottled purple and brown glaze, which was

coloured by the addition of powdered manganese. A wide range of different types of pots were made, but mugs and chamber pots are particularly common.



**CHINESE PORCELAIN (1650AD onwards)**

Very hard, thin and light white pottery, usually

with blue painted decoration. Made with a type of white clay, which contains decayed feldspar. First imported from China as fine-quality wares and later replicated in Britain.



**STAFFORDSHIRE SLIPWARE (1680 – 1750AD)**

The clay fabric is usually a pale buff colour, usually decorated with thin brown stripes and a yellow glaze, or yellow stripes

and a brown glaze. This was the first pottery to be made in moulds in Britain since Roman times, and the main products were flat dishes and plates. but cups were also made.



**GLAZED BLACK EARTHENWARE (Late 17<sup>th</sup> Century onwards)**

The smooth brick-red clay is very similar to that of

Glazed Red Earthenware, but the vessels have a black glaze, coloured by the addition of iron. Usually drinking vessels such as mugs, but also tall, narrow cups with up to eight handles, known as 'tygs'.



**CREAMWARE (1740 – 1880AD)**

A pale cream-coloured ware with a clear glaze, and softer than bone china. It was invented by Wedgwood, and made into lots of different types of pots which we would still recognise today: cups, saucers, plates, soup bowls, etc. When first made it was expensive, but by the 19th century it was considered to be poor quality, as better types of pottery were being made, so it was often painted with multi-coloured designs to try and make it more popular.

**MODERN**



**VICTORIAN (19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> Century AD)**

Hard white fabric with underglazed transfer print made into a wide range of different types of pottery, particularly the cups, plates and bowls with blue decoration which are still used today.



**BRICK & TILE**

Other items made of fired clay include tile used for floors and roofs; and brick.