

Pottery gives the excavator his best dating evidence for two reasons; and because it is friable and because it is indestructible! This sounds like a contradiction but of course it is not so; a vase is easily smashed into a hundred fragments, but the fragments themselves, if the pot has been properly fired, are not affected by fire or water.

Because pottery vessels are so breakable, they were not traded long distances from their place of manufacture as was the case with metal artifacts. Indeed in pre-Roman times, pots were almost invariably locally, probably home, made, whereas metal artifacts were traded from end to end of the Continent. Changes of fashion occur in this craft as in others and their sequence can frequently be traced, but when an entirely new technique makes its appearance, as for instance, the arrival of Beakers or the change in type in the Late Bronze Age, we can assume an immigration of new folk.

In Roman times the making of pots passed from the home to the workshop and we find that types are traded from the kilns for considerable distances, in some cases from the Continent. Though it ceases now to be an index of folk-movements, pottery becomes even more useful for dating purposes. Its friability and the fact that fashions changed more quickly under the impetus of competition and improved travel facilities, makes it possible by comparison of the finds of different sites, to date by means of pottery to within fifteen or twenty years.

It will be seen from the above how extremely important it is that care should be taken during excavation to find and preserve for examination every available sherd. Now let us consider how this is done.

The method followed on most scientifically conducted excavations is on these lines. The finds from each layer in every cutting must be kept separate, so the worker is provided with a box containing a label marked in this way: "R.48 XII 2". This, being interpreted means that the pottery etc. which he hopes to unearth, comes from the excavation made in Rowberrow field in 1948, from the twelfth cutting and the second layer therein. Whatever formula is used must always be adhered to and it is thus possible to trace the provenance of all the material found. When the worker has completed the excavation of his layer, he receives another box and label for the contents of the next. The pottery from his first box is then transferred to a bag which has been marked clearly with the same numbers as appear on the label which is put into the bag with the pottery. It is advisable, when possible, to allow the pottery to dry out before this is done, as in wet weather bags are liable to burst with disastrous consequences! In the workroom the washing, examination and classification of the finds is carried out.

The greatest care must be taken to avoid any confusion or mixture of sherds from different layers and it is advisable to wash the contents of bags from one layer at a time and to make sure that when the sherds are spread out to dry, the appropriate label is always with them. Where a small quantity of pottery is being dealt with, the dried sherds may be returned to their bags, these being marked to show that their contents have been washed, but with large amounts good sized trays or boxes could be used and all pottery from the same layer of the same cutting put into one box. In the case of adjacent cuttings, where no structural change has occurred, there seems no reason why pottery of corresponding layers should not be kept in the same box, indeed this may well facilitate the finding of joinable sherds, but needless to say this should only be done by a person with an intimate knowledge of the site ... when in doubt the lots should be kept separate.

After washing is completed, the sherds should be examined and any which, for the purpose of drawing, mending or comparison, may have to be temporarily removed from their labelled box, should be marked in Indian ink with the same symbols as appear on the label. Sherds belonging to the same pot may be taken away, after marking, and joined, the pot being reconstructed as far as possible.

Sections will be drawn of these reconstructed vessels and of all rim sherds. Such marked sherds, when returned to their box, should be kept separate for future reference, either in a small box or bag or a division across the box or tray could be made to divide the marked and unmarked sherds.

A Pottery Book should be kept in which sherds from each layer in every cutting are described and drawn. Descriptions and sketches of Small Finds may be added in their appropriate layers for purposes of comparison, although these will also be dealt with separately. Other objects occurring in the layer, such as slag, charcoal etc. should be duly noted. For this purpose a loose-leaf note-book would be suitable, so that drawings may, when more convenient, be made in the artist's home and subsequently added.

The next stage in the work on the pottery will be the search for parallels to our finds for publication in the final Report. Our pottery should be compared first with that from important, well-dated sites within a reasonable distance of Camerton and with that from smaller excavations in the vicinity. Unless specially dealing with the distributional aspect, it is only when a useful comparison cannot be found at hand that search need be made in Reports of far distant sites.

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We recently approached the Spa Director with a suggestion that we should stage an Archaeology Exhibition as part of the Bath Assembly for 1949. We have plenty of material and had drawn up a scheme for what we believe would have been quite a unique display. We were, however, rather late in the field, and all the available accommodation was already earmarked. Next year, perhaps -----.

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The "Archaeological Newsletter", a monthly production, has very much impressed us. We commend it as being authoritative without being pedantic, and as covering a very wide and varied field of archaeological topics.

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The feverish energy shown on the "dig" by one of our members is thought to be connected with the laudible habit of the antiquaries of the old school of burying a bottle of some eminently desirable fluid before they did their "fill in". From an occasional look of disappointment, we infer that these gentry did not flourish around the Camerton area.

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The custodian of the C.E.C. "Scrap Book", Mr. M. Gould, will be pleased to receive press-cuttings, photographs, etc., on any archaeological topic.

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