

Herefordshire ceramics type fabric series

post-medieval pottery found in Herefordshire

earthenwares and stonewares

Earthenware is potting clay fired to a temperature that changes the clays chemically and permanently but not to the point of vitrification. Depending on the type of clay and the type of pottery made, this is between 500 degrees and 1200 degrees Celsius. For post medieval pottery it was usually about 1000 degrees Celsius.

Earthenware holds water but is porous, so liquid will seep through to the outside, evaporating and cooling the liquid held in the vessel. To make earthenware waterproof it is coated with glaze.

Stoneware is very hard fabric which varies from almost white to bluish grey. A brown glaze over a drab body is also seen. The surface is glazed with salt, pitted slightly like orange peel. The glaze could also be red lead. A widespread stoneware type were 'Bellamines', named after Cardinal Bellarmine, they are round-bellied jugs with a relief of a bearded man (the cardinal) on the neck. These were made in Cologne in the late 16th and 17th century and traded widely. They were also emulated: a bellarmine kiln site was excavated at Woolwich Ferry in 1973/4. This operated between 1620 and 1650 and was the first stoneware kiln in Britain.

glazes

Glazes were generally lead, added to the biscuit (once-fired) body and fired again at a lower temperature. Lead glaze can be clear or green-yellow.

Tin glaze was discovered in Italy in the late medieval period and is called 'maiolica'. Tin glaze gives the appearance of white paint. The technique spread to south France where it was called 'faience'. In the 16th century it was made in Holland and is called Delftware. From here the technique and styles spread to England. In decorated vessels, the once fired body would be coated with tin glaze and decorated on the still wet glaze and then fired again. A third transparent lead glaze might be put over the decoration.

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