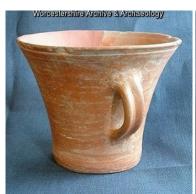# March update

Finds progress

This is now underway! The animal bone is with Alison Foster, a Zooarchaeologist, and we're due to hear back about these at the end of April. Pottery and most other types of finds have already been identified by Laura Griffin, one of our Finds Archaeologists, and the coins (mainly found by metal detecting) will hopefully be off to a coin specialist soon.

So many tankards!

Having studied the pottery assemblage, Laura has noticed a few unusual things about the site. Firstly, there are lots of Roman tankards and other drinking vessels. Secondly, the proportion of Black Burnished ware pottery compares to other styles of pottery is particularly high.

1. Why so many drinking vessels?

Roman farmsteads usually have more storage jars and dishes than tankards and beakers for drinking. As a broad rule of thumb, if more than 25% of the pottery comes from drinking vessels then the site is usually either military or along the lines of a roadside inn. Our assemblage of Roman pottery has well over this percentage of tankards and beakers… So, what was going on? The excavation obviously only covered a small portion of the site, so we might only be looking at one specific building or short-term use of the site. It's intriguing though that the Roman pottery isn't looking like a typical Worcestershire farmstead.

Tankard (left) and beaker (middle) made in Severn Valley ware, a common type of local pottery. Black Burnished ware jar (right), shows the highly polished surface that this pottery has, along with a distinctive diamond pattern around the middle.

These are fairly complete examples from the [Worcestershire Ceramics database](#) – not from the Roots in Time site unfortunately!

2. Black Burnished Ware

This dark grey pottery has a shiny, smooth surface from being polished before firing. It was made in Dorset and is found on most Roman sites in Worcestershire. However, the proportion we have is higher than normal. For comparison, Laura looked at excavations of a Roman site in Offenham (which is nearby as the

crow flies). Surprisingly, the amount of Black Burnished ware compared to the more local Severn Valley Ware and other pottery types was a lot less in Offenham than at our site.

Black Burnished Ware is thought to be dependent on trade connections, so well connected sites tend to have more of it. A Roman road is though to run from Hinton-on-the-Green, past Norton and over to Alcester. It's likely that these wares were coming from Alcester and our site had better access to the markets or trade heading that way. Far from the River Avon being a useful travel and trade route, it was perhaps the barrier that resulted in Offenham sites getting their pottery from elsewhere.

Mini tankard

Remember the almost complete mug, or mini tankard that was found? Laura has checked for parallels and found that quite a few other Roman excavations in Worcestershire found similar sized tankards too. Below is a photo of ours (left) next to another fairly complete example.

What is more puzzling than its height is the base and wide, flared top. A crack also seems to run around the base's whole outer surface and the diameter of the tankard at the top isn't too far off the standard size. One intriguing suggestion is that the potter started making a normal sized (taller) tankard that went wrong, so they cut the lower portion off and added in a new base.

Compare how wide the top of the Roots in Time mini tankard (left) is to another example (right).

Coin cleaning

Yes, you can wash metal artefacts! But only if you know what you're doing. The other week, our Finds Archaeologist Sam Elwell carefully cleaned the collection of coins so that they're read to head off to a numismatist (coin specialist).

Using a microscope for clarity, dirt is carefully either sponged or scrapped off using a combination of water and acetone. Once as clean as they can get, they're then coated in paraloid (a type of glue) to protect the surface from further decay.

Right: Sam cleaning one of the Roman coins from the site.