

The Romano-British pottery 1998-2003

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488 sherds of Romano-British pottery were recovered from the excavations. The excavations produced a wide range of wares (Fig. 1) coming from distant sources including Dorset, Mancetter-Hartshill, the Severn Valley kilns to the south, the Cheshire Plains kilns, Derbyshire kilns around Belper, Lincolnshire kilns and mortaria, from Mancetter-Hartshill and perhaps from Wilderspool. Most of the pottery came from the large ditch 304/5. The vessel types indicate a date range from the late first/early second centuries to the mid third century at least. One jar rim sherd may date as late as the late-fourth century and the Dales ware and developed flanged bowl is more likely to be late third or early fourth century. Pottery from excavations in 2003 has extended the date range suggested during spot dating of the material previously recovered.

The pottery was abraded and sherds tended to be small, particularly the samian. Although the samian was badly abraded and the sherds were small, many vessels were represented. The group seems to be a rubbish deposit which has accumulated elsewhere over several centuries before being cleared into the ditch. Many of the jars, particularly in BB1, Dales and gritty grey ware retained signs of use in the form of burnt deposits still adhering around the rim and upper bodies, perhaps where food had boiled over and burnt on. Rivet holes indicate that pottery supply was not always regular and curation was necessary. This is common in Wales but not South Yorkshire where it has been suggested that pottery supply met demand.

The vessel types indicate a high status site (Fig. 2). Evans has done extensive work on this area and the Mellor assemblage compares with urban and villa sites rather than rural sites on the basis of its jar:bowl ratio. This conclusion is supported by the range of traded wares present (Fig 1). Unfortunately there are few sites published in the North West for which fabric and form quantifications are available but comparison with Ochre Brook, a site with a military connection, confirms a relatively high status (Fig. 4).

The fabric profile of the site was compared with other sites with available data (Fig. 3). This confirmed the impression that Mellor was obtaining a wide range of fabrics and taking advantage of its position on the edge of several ceramic zones. Compared with the other sites in the north-west, it used rather less BB1 and rather more grey ware, similar to Derbyshire sites. The proportion of Cheshire Plains wares was much lower and the site obtained coarse wares from Derbyshire, a fabric rare on sites further west. The relative quantity of samian is remarkable at Mellor and apparently surpasses any of the other sites. An initial impression of these sherds suggested that although they were highly abraded and fragmentary, they did represent a relatively large number of vessels. If specialist examination confirms this, it would appear that Mellor was able to obtain and afford the best of tablewares, perhaps from the fort at Melandra. Other fine wares at the site, such as the early fine ware bowls, might also belong to this period. There are few fine wares in the third and fourth centuries but this may be due to the absence of a ready source of such wares. The site was still commanding the acquisition of wares from as far away as Yorkshire or Lincolnshire and Dorset.

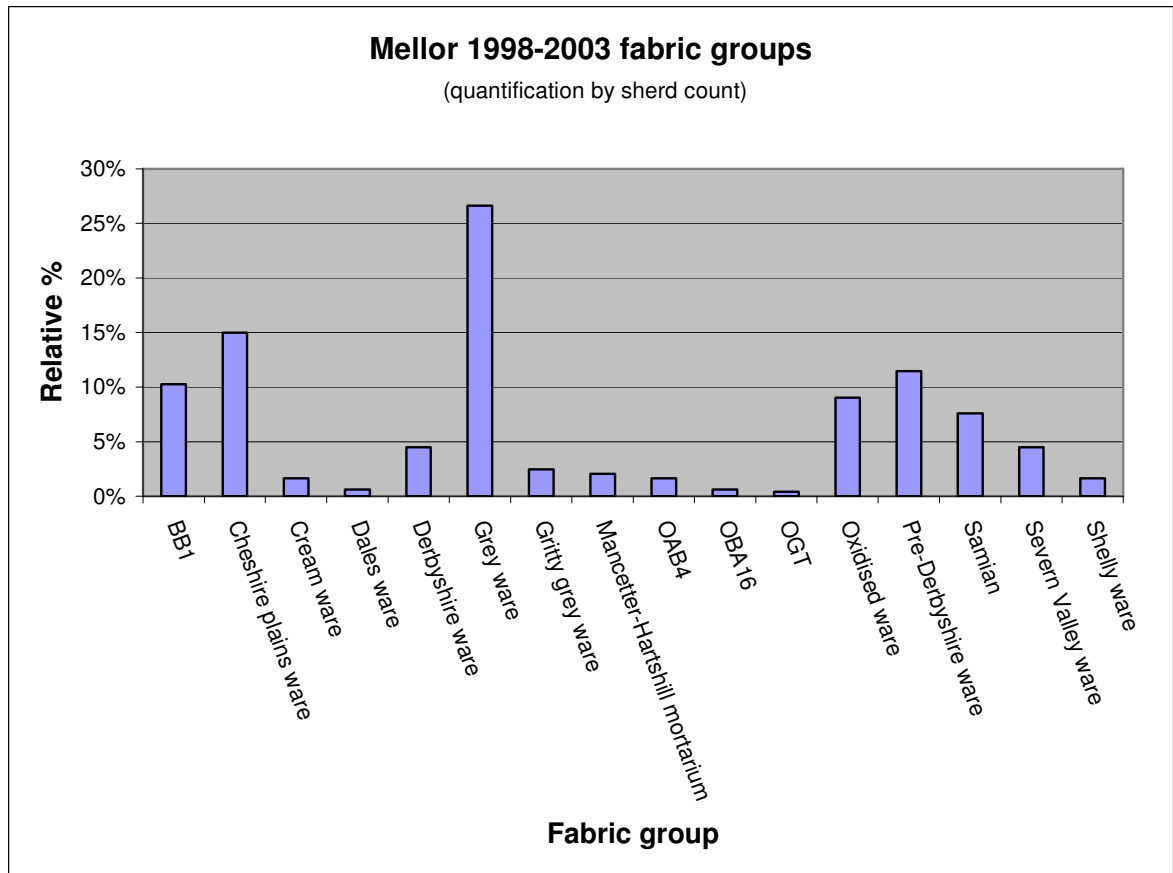


Figure 1

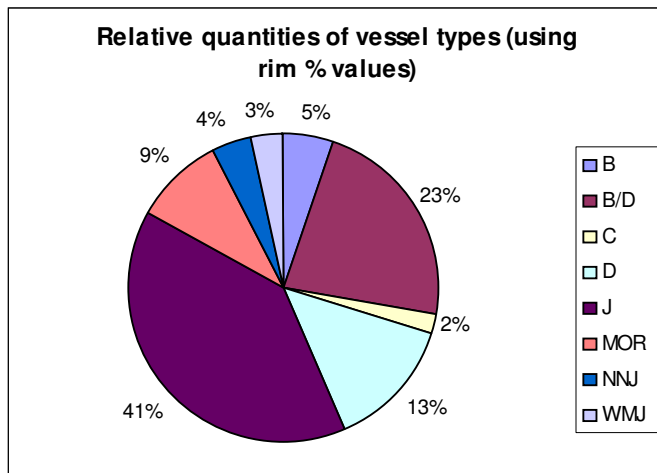


Figure 2

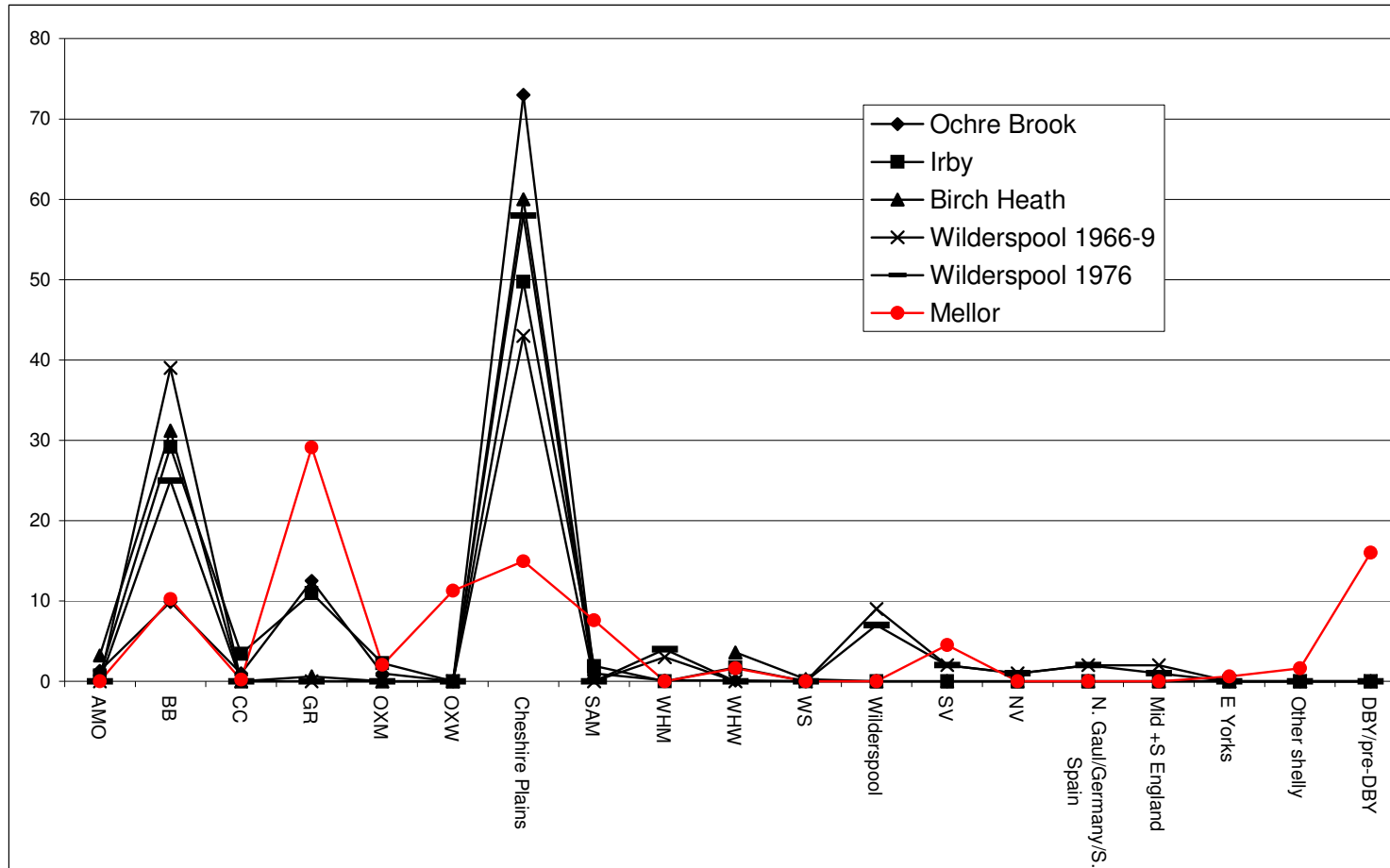


Figure 3

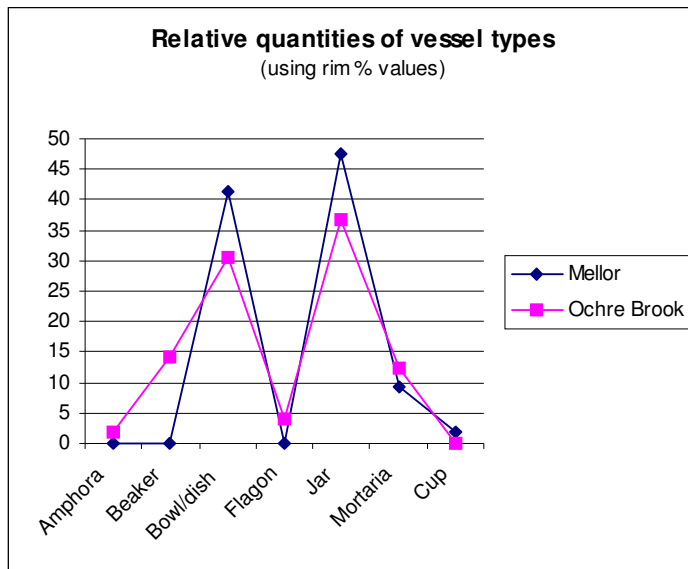


Figure 4