

HENBURY SCHOOL EXCAVATIONS



Heritage
LOTTERY FUNDED



Fossils of sea shells and other creatures are quite common in the Bristol area. They are present in the limestone underlying the Henbury site. Some may be 200 million years old.



The earliest evidence for human activity found at the Henbury excavations was pieces of worked flint dropped by Middle and New Stone Age hunters between ten and five thousand years ago.



Pottery was used for mainly cooking and serving food and drink. Because styles and 'fabrics' change over time it is a very useful dating tool for archaeologists. The Henbury excavations produced many thousands of fragments of pottery, mainly dating to the Iron Age (c. 800 BC to AD 43) and Roman periods (43-410 AD).



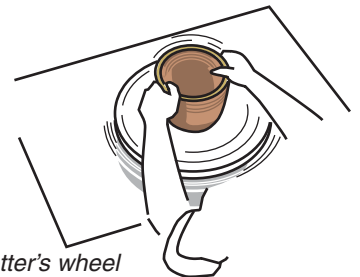
Most Iron Age pottery is hand made (not thrown on a wheel) and fired in a bonfire. Vessel shapes are mainly simple jars which were used for cooking and storage. The potting clay was mixed with crushed limestone or other rocks to help with firing and make the pots stronger.



making an Iron Age pot



Roman 'Severn Valley Ware' pottery. This is an orange-firing type of pottery which is very common in the Gloucester and Bristol area. It was wheel-thrown and fired in a kiln. Lots of different vessel shapes (forms) were made including jars, bowls, plates and mugs. It was made throughout the Roman period, roughly between AD 43 and AD 400.



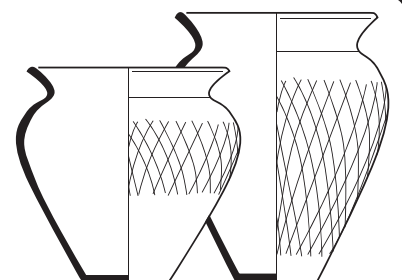
using a potter's wheel



Roman Greyware pottery is common across Roman Britain and many hundreds of fragments were found in the Henbury excavations. It was wheel-thrown and fired in a kiln. Greyware jars and bowls were used for cooking and storage. Kilns used to fire greywares are known from Congresbury, to the south-west of Bristol. These date to approximately 200-400 AD.



Roman 'Black-Burnished Ware'. This type of pottery was made near Poole in Dorset. It is hard and strong, and so very good for cooking in. It is very common over much of Roman Britain and even found at Hadrian's Wall. Its surfaces are black and made shiny (burnished) as decoration. Vessel forms are mainly jars (cooking pots), bowls and possible casseroles.

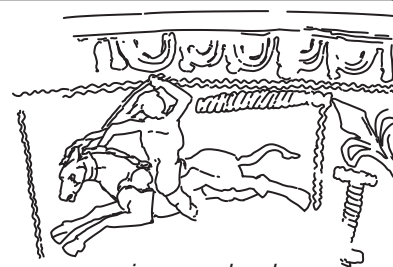




Roman 'mortaria'. These are the distinctive mixing bowls used in Roman times for preparing food. They have grit impressed into the inside of the vessel to toughen it and to help with the mixing process. Most examples found at the Henbury excavations came from Oxfordshire and dated to the period AD 200-400.



Roman samian ware. This was the 'Wedgewood' of Roman times. Glossy, bright red and sometimes highly decorated, it was made in Roman France (Gaul) and imported to Britain in large quantities. Most vessel forms are plates, cups and bowls. Samian ware dates to the early Roman period, between AD 43 and about AD 200.



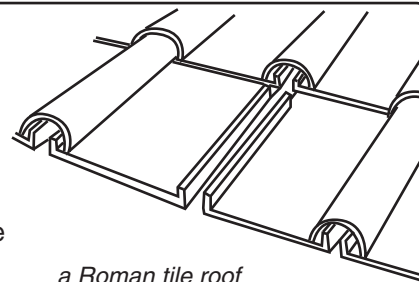
a horseman design on a samian ware bowl



Roman amphorae. These were the large containers which brought wine, olive oil and other products to Britain from the Mediterranean area. Examples from the Henbury excavations came from Southern Spain and originally transported olive oil. They date to the period approx. AD 43-300.



Roman brick and tile. Some Roman buildings had roofs made from flat and curving tiles. These were similar to roofs still seen in Mediterranean countries today. Bricks and box-like 'flue tiles' were also sometimes used for making Roman central heating systems. Some Roman tile was found at the Henbury excavations, but stone tiles were more common.



a Roman tile roof



Roman coins. Several Roman coins were found at Henbury. One was a silver denarius of Hadrian (AD 117-38). Most were made of bronze and dated to the Late Roman period (after about AD 250). The examples in the mock excavation are replicas.



Lots of animal bone was found during the Henbury excavations from Iron Age and Roman deposits. Animals including cows, sheep and pigs were kept to produce meat. Bones which may have been chopped, cut or sawn tell us that they may be butchery waste. Animal bones can be used to make objects such as handles, combs and pins. A Roman bone pin and a belt fitting were found at Henbury.



Oyster shells. Oysters were very popular in Roman times and in later periods. Some Roman oysters were found at Henbury. They may have come from 'oyster beds' in South Wales and were transported in barrels.



Later finds. Pottery and other finds dating to after the Roman period were also found during the Henbury excavations. Most of the pottery and clay pipe dates to the 18th and 19th centuries and were probably made in Bristol.