

## A Jackfield Ware sherd from Little Comberton, Worcestershire with observations on ceramic scatters

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### Introduction

A glazed post-medieval ceramic sherd was unearthed during cultivations at Little Comberton, Worcestershire (VC37 SO9643) on 21 July 2019. The external ornamentation was distinctive and the piece proved difficult to identify.

### Discussion

The wheel-turned sherd is 4.5 mm thick and 37 mm in length, the fabric being a dense, fine-grained micaceous clay. It is glazed very dark brown, almost black, on both sides. Clearly this was a relatively modern piece of pottery but the complexity and detail of the external ornamentation proved difficult to rationalise.

I therefore approached the Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service at Worcester where Mr Rob Hedge eventually settled the matter. He concluded (*in litt.*, 11 September 2019), and I am in no doubt that this is correct, that the ceramic sherd is a fragment of a Jackfield Ware vessel. These vessels are highly distinctive and were presumably expensive to purchase when made. They are typically dark glazed and, as in this case, may be overlain with intricate gilded patterns, so precisely designed that they appear almost to have been stencilled. In some examples, such as this one, the pattern is inlaid with small geometric dimples into which blobs of white slip are set, creating a distinctive punctillated effect (01.); in fact Godden (1974) regards this as slipware.



01. Sherd from a Jackfield Ware vessel, Little Comberton, Worcestershire 21 July 2019. The gilding and slip detailing is apparent.

Jackfield Wares were produced in the Black Country from about AD1750 and the more refined wares such as this are usually provenanced to Jackfield, Ironbridge. They replicated Japanese laquerware which held a strong fascination for Victorian collectors. The amount of work involved in the production of these pieces must have been considerable and a similar item believed to date from about AD1890 can be viewed online at

[www.zoomerman.net/store/p2460/Antique\\_Victorian\\_Blackware\\_Jackfield\\_Gilt\\_Enamel\\_Foliage\\_Coffee\\_Pot\\_C1890](http://www.zoomerman.net/store/p2460/Antique_Victorian_Blackware_Jackfield_Gilt_Enamel_Foliage_Coffee_Pot_C1890)

The find site is part of an open field that in AD1843 was glebe land rented out by the church to villagers as agricultural holdings. This was in the period of incumbency of the Revd William Parker that extended from AD1826 to AD1885. Perhaps this sherd originated from the rectory in Little Comberton. However, it is recognised that sediments in the wider area are marked by ceramic scatters (Whitehead, 2016), including fragments of post-medieval pancheons and other iron-glazed wares. In my view there is a strong possibility that ceramic fragments may have been scattered across the landscape to improve the surface drainage of what had been an extremely intractable area.

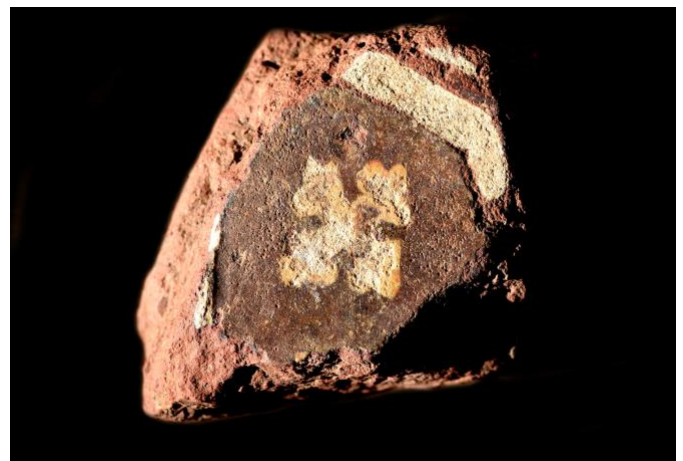


Fig. 02. Fragment of inlaid medieval ecclesiastical floor tile from the modern land surface, Little Comberton, Worcestershire, April 1980. The heraldic device is that of the Beauchamps who resided at Elmley Castle.

During April 1980, a fragment of an inlaid ecclesiastical floor tile (02) dating to about AD1400 and bearing the crosslet cross device of the Beauchamps of Elmley Castle was found in the grounds of what is now Nash's Farm, Little Comberton (VC37 SO9642) (Whitehead, 2000). In all probability this was ceramic waste that was scattered across the farmed landscape.

### Acknowledgement

I thank Mr Rob Hedge, a finds specialist from the Worcester Archive and Archaeology Service.

### References

- Godden, G.A., 1974. *British pottery*. Barrie & Jenkins, 452pp.  
Whitehead, P.F., 2000. *The Little Comberton Millennium Text*. Published privately, pp. 1-19.  
Whitehead, P.F., 2016. Archaeology, human occupation and sedimentary sequences at Old House Farm, Little Comberton, Worcestershire. *Worcestershire Record* 41:57-65.