A note on pottery dating and codes

Sheila Raven

The spreadsheets (pottery all for the three zones of the site) show the % breakdown of Roman as opposed to prehistoric pottery for each context (at the columns near the end). Under the pottery specialists advice, we also did a probability calculation based on these %'s, as to whether each context should be phased as Prehistoric, Roman, or 'Pre+' and 'Rom+' (latter two = fairly even mixture of both so it can't be pinned down by pottery alone as Roman or Prehistoric phase). This probability figure is the 'PPDate' (=provisional phasing date) on the end column. This is a rather crude phasing tool compared to what people normally have admittedly, but it's the best we have for suggestions of phasing for all the contexts and it's what is used in trench narratives and their context lists. Also the idea is that if there are only low %'s of prehistoric pot in a largely Roman pot context, this is probably residual prehistoric pot in a Roman layer or feature. And if there are only low %'s of Roman pot in a feature with high % of prehistoric pottery, this is probably contamination/disturbance in the upper fills. In both these cases our probability calculation puts these as just Prehistoric or just Roman, which is how they will appear in the PPDate column.

More detailed pottery dating has been supplied by the two specialists (Lisa Brown for prehistoric and Jane Timby for Roman) for a limited number of key contexts.

To clarify what the various short codes mean:

ROM = 80% plus of Roman pot in context = classified as a Roman (even though there may be a few residual/intrusive sherds of another period)

PR = 80% plus of prehistoric pot in context = classified as prehistoric (even though there may be a few intrusive sherds of another period)

PR+ = at least 70% of prehistoric pot in context = still classified as prehistoric with a fair amount of later intrusive material

ROM+ = at least 70% of Roman pot in context = still classified as Roman with a fair amount of earlier residual material

PR/ROM = 50-70% only of a single period pottery (often its almost 50/50 ratio), so cannot phase to one period on pottery alone

SAX= Early Saxon (5th/6th century)

SAX? = probably Saxon (but sherds are either too few or not very diagnostic)

Obviously for Roman contexts coin finds can really pin down the context to a specific date, so always worth checking that on the coin list for each zone. Plus on every "stratrecords" context spreadsheet for each trench, any coin dating plus the pottery PPDate is there in the last 2 columns for every context.