

**PROJECT PROPOSAL TO HISTORIC ENGLAND:
A FABRIC TYPE-SERIES FOR MEDIEVAL AND POST-MEDIEVAL
POTTERY IN DEVON & CORNWALL**

<i>Project Name</i>	<i>A Fabric Type Series for Medieval and Post-Medieval Pottery in Devon and Cornwall</i>
Organisation applying for funding	North Devon Council
Company Number	n/a
VAT Registration Number	GB 144711092
Charities Commission Number	n/a
Author(s) and contact details	John Allan, David Dawson & Alison Mills
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Background

The fundamental need to create a series of regional type-series which would regularise the description and classification of medieval and later pottery in England, and serve as a vital tool to improve the overall standard of future publications in this field, was outlined in the Medieval Pottery Research Group's *Research Framework for Post-Roman Ceramic Studies in Britain* (Irving 2011).

The specific regional aims for South-West England outlined in that document included the need for 'developing a series of accurately described regional type-series, supported by thin-sections and related to ICP data', and it suggested that this could be based on the principal regional museum collections (p. 41, recommendation SW5). Regarding the individual counties within the region, the need for 'correlation of the type-series' was highlighted in Cornwall (p. 42, recommendation SW17), and might equally have been highlighted for Devon.

In the South-Western region, the case for the provision of a type-series for Somerset has been accepted by HE and is now being worked on actively. There is now an equally strong case for extending this provision with the creation of a complementary type-series which would be accessible to researchers throughout Devon and Cornwall.

The existing disjointed pattern of reporting post-Roman pottery certainly has an adverse impact on the standard of archaeological work on medieval and later sites in the area, and makes it difficult for archaeologists in curating roles in local government and elsewhere to assess the quality of current work. The patchy provision of type-series which would act as reference collections for Devon and Cornwall is a fundamental shortcoming in this regard.

The study area

The two counties cover a big area (about 150 miles across). A pronounced feature of the medieval and later pottery of Devon and Cornwall is the presence of very distinct regional divisions within this area. Three very different pottery traditions operated in the two counties:

1. East Devon including Exeter, closely related to the S Somerset industry.
2. North Devon, centred on Barnstaple/Bideford but including the large rural area of

Exmoor, NW Devon and NE Cornwall including the N side of Dartmoor. This industry operated an international trade in the 17th and 18th centuries, exporting to Wales, Ireland, North America and elsewhere.

3. South Devon, Plymouth and the remaining parts of Cornwall.

These groupings reflect deep-seated regional patterns in the two counties which are still evident today. Each has one or more major urban centre (Exeter; Barnstaple; Plymouth and Truro).

State of reference material in the counties

Exeter is best served, with a type-series set up in the 1980s and held in the RAM Museum, with some related to thin-sections and ICP analyses, but it needs updating, having last had an overhaul about 20 years ago.

An outline type-series for North Devon was set up in Barnstaple c. 1990 but it has fallen out of use and now needs complete rethinking in the light of more recent discoveries.

For Cornwall, there is an excellent type-series for Launceston Castle but it is almost inaccessible to researchers working in the county, being held at Fort Brockhurst, Gosport, about 4-5 hours' drive away, in stores which are not really set up for research visits. No type-series in any form can currently be consulted in Cornwall itself.

Aims

- To create a comprehensive database of type fabrics covering Devon and Cornwall, which would be accessible online and which would meet *The National Standard for the Characterization of Pottery Wares and Fabrics* (Griffin and Hurst 2019).
- To carry out a limited programme of petrological and chemical analysis which would fill the major gaps in the coverage of thin-sections and ICP analyses for the region, and set the database on a firm petrological footing.
- To form a publicly accessible type-series of sherd samples which would be housed in centres where they would be used by members of the profession and the wider public. At least three will probably be needed. The museums of Barnstaple and Exeter are the obvious centres for two of these; whether Truro or Plymouth or would be the most suitable place for the third will be explored in the Project Design. Each of these centres has a substantial local museum, which we anticipate might host the type-series.
- To encourage knowledge transfer to a new generation of archaeologists.

Business Case

The provision of reliably classified type-series would not only be a fundamental tool in the reporting of medieval and later sites in the area; it would also be a major resource for museum curators (who often have limited knowledge in identification), for other users such as the Portable Antiquities Scheme, and for members of the public (who commonly bring pottery for identification). It should lead to better physical accessibility in museums, and – crucially – make much of the key information about medieval pottery available online.

The following additional reasons for the need for this project have been identified:

1. The specialists who have published most of the pottery reports in our region over the last 40 years are aged around 70 or older and are now approaching retirement. Although they are keen to support

younger colleagues where possible, there is a serious danger of loss of accumulated knowledge and a great need for succession-planning.

2. We see the current success of the Somerset scheme as an excellent opportunity to benefit from their work. It is essential that the Devon and Somerset schemes work as an integrated whole, especially with regard to East Devon and Exeter, where the South Somerset industry and its related local expressions dominated the pottery industry. There would therefore be great advantage in setting up the Devon type-series while the Somerset one is still running. It is also possible that a parallel scheme will soon be underway in Dorset; again, there would be great advantage in running the two schemes at the same time.

3. At present there are very few development opportunities for younger practitioners to build a specialism in pottery and a career in this field (MPRG Research Framework 2011, 5 and 14).

4. The additional value of setting up a post in the very near future at Barnstaple will be described below. The very considerable interest in the post-medieval ceramics of North Devon in North America, Ireland, Wales and elsewhere adds an international dimension to the project.

5. In addition, this project supports the vision, values, and priorities for 2020–23, as set out in Historic England’s Corporate Plan:

- **Vision:** ‘We pass on our heritage in better condition’
- **Values:**
 - 1) Learning: ‘We never stop learning and we share our knowledge and expertise’
 - 2) Collaboration: ‘We work together and with partners to achieve the best for people and places’
- **Strategic objectives:** ‘Give people the skills, knowledge, confidence and motivation to fight for, look after and make the most of their historic environment’
- **Strategic activities:** ‘Providing expert and reliable advice to inform the care and development of the historic environment’
- **Outputs:**
 - 1) ‘Knowledge creation in necessary areas’; ‘a sector workforce equipped with improved skills to share knowledge, facilitate and persuade’; ‘a stronger, more dynamic, connected and adaptable sector, able to advise, support and manage change’
 - 2) ‘Advice in the form of papers, guidance, comments, Listing recommendations, statutory letters etc’
- **Tier 1 Activities and related Tier 2 Activities:**
 - 2) ‘Investing in knowledge creation, skills and organisations (including EHT) where our help is most needed’
 - 2.1 ‘Create necessary new knowledge’
 - 2.4 ‘Build/develop sector capacity and capability to make the most of the historic environment’
 - 7) Develop innovative techniques and tools to share our knowledge and expertise in inspirational ways

This project also aligns with the following themes in Historic England’s Research Strategy (2016) and Research Agenda (2017):

- **#inform - Improving and developing heritage information management:**
 - ‘How can we encourage the sharing, linking and interoperability of historic environment data and information, particularly information derived from the commercial sector?’
 - ‘How can we ensure the consistent development, application and enforcement of existing technical information and data standards and their promotion to others?’
 - ‘How can we secure maximum public value from commercially generated information?’
- **#skill – Working more effectively:**
 - ‘What benchmarks and approaches can be developed to improve standards of work where needed and demonstrate the impact of investigative research in the historic environment?’

Products, communication, engagement and archiving

- The main outcome will be the creation of a comprehensive and publicly accessible type-series of medieval and later pottery for Devon & Cornwall, available both as a sherd collection and as a fully searchable online resource.
- This will include a visual database of each fabric, linked to a collection of thin-sections and to the results of ICP analysis.
- The type-series will be compatible with other type-series developed nationally under HE guidance.
- The result will be launched in a workshop, to which contracting archaeologists, curators and members of the public will be invited

Project Team

- The work will be undertaken by Kate Berlewen, who trained in ceramic petrography at UCL under Dr Patrick Quinn and is currently working in the Conservation Laboratory of the RAM Museum, Exeter, where she is preparing her report on the major group of later medieval ceramics from Princesshay, Exeter.
- The project will be managed by a steering group of John Allan, David Dawson, Naomi Payne and Alison Mills. The team mixes the leading pottery specialists in the south-west of the last generation (JA, DD), the person currently working on the Somerset Type Series project who is also reporting on many of the recent projects in the region (NP), and the resident curator in North Devon with much experience of managing heritage projects (AM).
- If required, Gary Young (formerly of Exeter Archaeology) will provide photography.

Partners

- We have had a strong steer that the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon will become a partner, and anticipate the same regarding the museums of Exeter and Plymouth. We have not yet approached Truro. The confirmation of these partnerships will be a task in the Project Design.
- Following the successful collaboration which arose with the Department of Archaeology of the University of Exeter in the HE-supported *Exeter a Place in Time* project, the Project Design

will explore with Prof. Stephen Rippon and his colleagues the question of whether this project can build on the previous collaboration.

- We expect to invite the HER teams of Cornwall County Council and Devon County Council to join us as partners.
- The possibility of inviting the archaeological societies of both counties, and of Plymouth, to join the project as partners will be considered at the Project Design stage.

Methods

The following tasks would be carried out:

- Discuss the programme and our tasks in a start-up meeting
- Carry out review of collections and literature
- Identify the key assemblages, starting with kilns, then from selected urban & rural sites.
- Establish the extent of previous programmes of thin-sectioning, ICP & Qemscan analyses, including the physical locations of thin-sections; identify gaps in coverage.
- Building on existing type-series, create a database of fabrics, following MPRG guidelines
- Create or improve physical type-series accessible in three centres in the two counties
- Describe each fabric, using macroscopic, thin-section and chemical analysis
- Provide photographs of each fabric for inclusion in the online database
- Build up and improve existing distribution maps of fabrics

2. We propose starting with Barnstaple, since the setting-up of a type-series there will be immediately feed into the major local initiative, currently being pursued energetically by the Barnstaple Excavation Project, to publish the backlog of pottery from Barnstaple. This would have the advantage of engagement with highly active and committed staff centred on the museum.

Timetable

Project Design stage

Having discussed this with HE staff and colleagues in Somerset, we propose that the initial project should be a 45-day exercise in which a Project Design covering all of Devon & Cornwall would be prepared. This would entail reviewing the collections and identifying key assemblages in each of the three ceramic regions, followed up by visits to relevant museums (see also further details in responses to HE questions below). It would also explore options for bodies hosting the different stages of the project.

Having considered the possible ways of handling this, we believe that the most satisfactory way to undertake this project would be to choose a self-employed individual, with the grant would be paid to North Devon Council, who would administer the grant. We now have confirmation from both Kate Berlewen & NDC that they would be happy to operate in this way.

For our revised timetable see *Answers to HE questions* below.

Cost

Project design

<i>Role/Item</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Day Rate</i>	<i>Days</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Staff costs</i>					
Project Officer	Kate Berlewen (self-employed)	£210	45	£9450	£9870
Project Manager/N Devon administration	Alison Mills (to backfill current role)	£240	4	£960	£1200
Liaison with Somerset project	Naomi Payne	£210	3	£630	£630
Two sessions with Dr Taylor	Roger Taylor	£250	1	£250	£250
Contribution by Project Board member	David Dawson	£250	2	£500	£500
Contribution by Project Board member	John Allan	£250	4	£1000	£1000
TOTAL Staff cost					£13,450

<i>Non-staff costs</i>					
Travel expenses (KB)				600.00	£600.00
TOTAL COST					£14,050

Main programme

Costing to be determined in the Project Design stage.

Guide cost at this stage (based on c. £40K for Somerset, where there is one type-series).....c. **£55K**

PART 2: RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS RAISED BY THE STAFF IN THEIR EMAIL OF 27 OCTOBER 2022

1. Does the Launceston Castle type series at Fort Brockhurst belong to EHT? The proposal doesn't really explain how this will be folded into the new work. Should EHT be a partner?

Yes, the collection is owned by EHT, and we recognise that it is a key collection. The project officer will certainly be expected to visit this material by appointment with EHT staff, and will need to give careful consideration to the published report on it. We envisage liaison/discussion

with the first named writer of the Launceston report (Duncan Brown) but do not think it will be necessary for EHT to be a partner.

2. *The methods section doesn't overtly include creation of the online resource.*

That is because HE are organising that as a separate project.

3. *I'd be interested to see a more detailed breakdown of the 9 weeks work to prepare the Project Design.*

See also Task List below.

4. *The situation in Devon and Cornwall seems to be a lot more complicated than for Somerset, so the Somerset programme cost plus £15k sounds like it might be an underestimate for the main programme.*

Yes, that's true, with five major museum/institutional collections to deal with instead of the one in Somerset. One aim of the PD is to arrive at a more accurate cost. At this stage we believe this is a realistic estimate but it will be reviewed in the PD.

5. *Given that preparation of the PD is more expensive than usual, before they finally commission the PD the HE Grants Team would like to see the following included in your proposal:*

- *a task list in our usual format (<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/guidance-grants-projects/heaq065-guidance-for-grants-projects-oct21/> see page 29) linked as necessary to paragraphs on each task so we can see exactly what this stage or work will entail, and with person days so it links to costs*

<i>Task No.</i>	<i>Task details</i>	<i>Project Member</i>	<i>No. of Days</i>
<i>Project management</i>			
1.	<i>Project management</i>	<i>JA</i>	<i>2</i>
2.	<i>Initial team meeting</i>	<i>KB/AM/JA/DD/NP & HE rep.</i>	<i>1x5</i>
3.	<i>Final team meeting (with prep)</i>	<i>KB/JA/DD/NP & HE rep.</i>	<i>1 x5</i>
4.	<i>Project setting up & administration, N. Devon Council</i>	<i>AM</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Stage 1: Preparatory tasks</i>			
3.	<i>Initial contacts with museums & partners</i>	<i>KB</i>	<i>2</i>
4.	<i>Archaeological literature search</i>	<i>KB</i>	<i>3</i>
5.	<i>Visits to museums & HE store</i>	<i>KB</i>	<i>6</i>

6.	<i>Investigation of database options</i>	<i>KB</i>	2
<i>Stage 2: investigation of geology</i>			
7.	<i>Literature search</i>	<i>KB</i>	2
8.	<i>Investigation of thin-sections, ICP & Qemscan samples</i>	<i>KB</i>	2
9	<i>Two visits to Dr Roger Taylor</i>	<i>KB& NP</i>	1x2
<i>Stage 3: Production of PD</i>			
10.	Define exactly what is meant by a fabric type.	<i>KB</i>	1
11.	Identify the existing fabric type series. Establish: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The numbers of fabrics represented in each. • Whether the type series sherds are physically accessible • The physical order of arrangement 	<i>KB</i>	3
12.	Draft an initial structure to the type-series with a geological base. Discuss this with Dr Taylor.	<i>KB</i>	2
13.	Prepare listings for Devon & Cornwall of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • existing kiln samples • thin-sections • ICP samples • Qemscan samples <i>Spell out recommended programme for future thin-sections, ICP & Qemscan samples with costing</i>	<i>KB</i>	3
14.	Make a recommendation regarding whether existing fabric numbering will form the basis of new type-series or a completely different system is needed.	<i>KB</i>	2
15.	Investigate & make a recommendation regarding whether older and potentially problematic type series should be included in the project.	<i>KB</i>	3
16.	Investigate & make a recommendation whether there are gaps in the geographical coverage which need to be filled, e.g. by work on recent excavations or older excavated material without type series	<i>KB</i>	1
	Investigate & draw up a proposal for dealing with imported wares	<i>KB</i>	3
	Report on museum and other institutional contacts.	<i>KB</i>	2
11.	<i>Production of draft PD</i>	<i>KB</i>	5
12.	<i>Production of final PD following discussion with HE & Project Board</i>	<i>KB</i>	2

Personnel: *KB: Kate Berlewen*
AM: Alison Mills

*JA: John Allan
DD: David Dawson
NP: Naomi Payne*

- *a clear list of products, we will get a PD for the MAIN stage at the end of the work, but what else in terms of data/lists/spread-sheets or whatever*
 1. *Statement of proposed methodology*
 2. *Statement regarding choice of software*
 3. *Working list of samples for thin-sections & ICP with proposed choices for further work*
 4. *List of museums & sample collections considered/examined.*
 5. *Working bibliography*
 6. *Project design*

- *a risk log*
see below

Pottery type-series for Devon & Cornwall: Risk Log:

Description	Probability	Impact	Countermeasures	Estimated time /cost
1. PARTNERSHIP/EXTERNAL RISKS				
<p>1.1. Risk: Failure of participating museums/ organisations to make collections accessible when needed/respond to requests</p> <p>Consequence: Poor access to samples & lost time.</p>	Medium	High	<p>Actions: Make early overtures to relevant museums</p> <p>Put clear project governance structure in place and ensure regular meetings with partners.</p> <p>Project manager and pottery specialist maintain partnership relationships.</p> <p>Keep Historic England up to date with any changes or impacts on the project.</p>	Potentially the most serious problem
<p>1.2. Risk: Failures Associated with software/database</p> <p>Consequence: Project not supported.</p> <p>Lack of specialist knowledge to complete the project.</p>	Low	Medium	<p>Store the raw data in Excel format with an external body – e.g. the Archaeological Data Service. It would then be possible to translate the data into multiple formats as required.</p> <p>Actions: Ensure data and images are stored in a translatable format with a trusted digital repository.</p>	A potential problem in the main project; needs Preparation at the PD stage
2. STAFF RISKS				
<p>2.1 Risk: Staff absence from long-term sickness/Covid/ changes in staffing/</p> <p>Consequence: Delays to the programme;</p> <p>Financial impact if the project cannot be completed</p>	Low/medium	High	<p>Highly motivated staff.</p> <p>Actions: Should these happen during the project we would reassess the project and work out what can be achieved with existing resources</p> <p>Ensure the core project team meet regularly so everyone is up to date on all aspects of the project.</p> <p>Project management and supervision can be delegated in the short-term to cover absences and prevent delays.</p>	An unavoidable problem, as in any job which relies on a single individual, but the PD stage is short and the researcher very committed

- *a revised completion date/timetable for delivery*

Project design

Since Ms Berlewen has a commitment to complete a 20-hour per week post for the National Trust and wishes to honour this, we request a part-time post of 20 hours per week, allowing her to run the pottery project alongside her NT work. We would therefore like the **45 day programme to be spread over 18 weeks starting 23 January 2023, ending 26 May 2023.**

Main project

The equivalent of a two-year project, spread over three years, starting as soon as feasible after the completion of the project design. Ms Berlewen has asked that she should complete her current National Trust commitment, with the first two years worked 20 hours per week; the third would be full-time.

This would cover, therefore be for the period **29 May 2023–1 June 2026**

Pottery type-series for Devon & Cornwall: Risk Log:

Description	Probability	Impact	Countermeasures	Estimated time /cost
1. PARTNERSHIP/EXTERNAL RISKS				
<p>1.1. Risk: Failure of participating museums/ organisations to make collections accessible when needed/respond to requests</p> <p>Consequence: Poor access to samples & lost time.</p>	Medium	High	<p>Actions: Make early overtures to relevant museums</p> <p>Put clear project governance structure in place and ensure regular meetings with partners.</p> <p>Project manager and pottery specialist maintain partnership relationships.</p> <p>Keep Historic England up to date with any changes or impacts on the project.</p>	Potentially the most serious problem
<p>1.2. Risk: Failures Associated with software/database</p> <p>Consequence: Project not supported.</p> <p>Lack of specialist knowledge to complete the project.</p>	Low	Medium	<p>Store the raw data in Excel format with an external body – e.g. the Archaeological Data Service. It would then be possible to translate the data into multiple formats as required.</p> <p>Actions: Ensure data and images are stored in a translatable format with a trusted digital repository.</p>	A potential problem in the main project; needs Preparation at the PD stage
2. STAFF RISKS				
<p>2.1 Risk: Staff absence from long-term sickness/Covid/ changes in staffing/</p> <p>Consequence: Delays to the programme;</p> <p>Financial impact if the project cannot be completed</p>	Low/medium	High	<p>Highly motivated staff.</p> <p>Actions: Should these happen during the project we would reassess the project and work out what can be achieved with existing resources</p> <p>Ensure the core project team meet regularly so everyone is up to date on all aspects of the project.</p> <p>Project management and supervision can be delegated in the short-term to cover absences and prevent delays.</p>	An unavoidable problem, as in any job which relies on a single individual, but the PD stage is short and the researcher very committed

PART 3: responses to HE queries of 16 November 2022

Historic England's biggest question mark is over the time allocated to Stage 3 for production of the PD. We feel that 25 days for this is significantly too much. It seems out of balance with the time being spent elsewhere. Plus, your existing Project Proposal document, which is detailed and well considered, already contains several sections that can be transferred across to the PD pretty much as they stand. Please can we ask you to come back to us with a revised estimate for the tasks in this stage? We'd be very happy to talk through what is needed if that would help you feel more comfortable with reducing this figure.

Reply: This is probably a matter of language, as the preparation envisaged here is not just the writing but the various related tasks which are not itemised individually. The following list (by Naomi Payne and John Allan) describes in more detail the tasks to be undertaken in this time:

1. At an early stage, establish exactly what is meant by a fabric type. This will require consultation with HE/other workers on type-series elsewhere.
2. At an early stage, identify the existing fabric type series and quantify the numbers of fabrics represented in each. In addition to making lists of existing type series, the project will establish in detail the following practical information:
 - (a) Are type series sherds physically accessible?
 - (b) If not, can type sherds be easily located using published sources?
 - (c) Is the pottery arranged in a particular order?
3. Examine whether older and potentially problematic type series (notably that for Barnstaple; the Plymouth material may pose similar problems) can be incorporated in the project. The time taken to do this will be considerable (it may for example require some microscope work). [It may not be realistic to reclassify material, unless for example there is a pressing need to include material from a particularly important site.]
4. Draw up a proposal as to whether a completely new type-series should be used or whether type-series developed so far will be the starting point. [We have initially envisaged re-using the Exeter nos. with accompanying thin-sections & slide collection as the start for Devon, then adding to this. At this stage we also envisage using Launceston Castle as the starting point for Cornwall. This may or may not be the best way to proceed.]
5. It is essential that the structure of the type-series should have a geological base. This will require Kate to get a good initial grasp of the problems & potential of the region's v complex geology. Here Dr Taylor's published work will be fundamental; discussion with him about terminology (drawing also on his work on Roman and prehistoric pottery) will be an important element, but direct discussion with him will also be needed.

6. After initial general assessment, the project will start with compiling listings for Devon & Cornwall of the following:
 - existing kiln samples,
 - thin-sections,
 - ICP samples
 - Qemscan samples
7. Once a core list of sites has been compiled, gaps in the geographical coverage will be assessed. Work on recent excavations which have fabric type series (e.g. Wessex Archaeology - Lorraine Mepham – Sherford) may be valuable here. Failing that, groups of excavated material without type series might be identified in the PD for limited use in the full project.
8. Imports need some separate consideration. We recommend first looking at an existing framework. We will ask Kate to examine the MOLA programme, but it may require supplementary work.
9. We see the collaboration of museum staff as key to the project, and time will be needed to establish the project, for example at Truro, where we may meet a shortage of professional archaeological staff. The PD should spell out which museums should host the physical type-series and spell out potential problems in achieving this.

Proposal v4, 5 December 2022