LIA/RB Pottery Classification

(sources: S. Young, R. Conlon and CLASP website)

1.   Standards to be used

For the "Local People, Local Places" project, the CLASP website adopts the standardised Pottery Fabric Classification as employed by Northamptonshire Archaeology at Raunds, and at various other sites in Northamptonshire.   This standard shall be used for all relevant CLASP projects.

(see http://www.claspweb.org.uk/LOCAL/htmlpages/pot_fabrics_by_type_date.html)

A spreadsheet should be used to record the collection, with typical headings as shown below, where Age is classified as LIA, E, M or L (R-B), Saxon etc, sorted by Fabric or Age for further analysis.

e.g.	Sherd Ref.	Fabric*	Weight	Age	Comments
	21	C4	34	M	Everted rim jar
	22	A3	129	E	Jar with rilled shoulder

Using drop-down lists, four separate fabric columns for A, B, C & D covering the respective ranges given overleaf in the NA Classification tables (A, A1 to A4 & AB; B, B1 to B10 etc). NB: some Fabric Type numbers are missing, e.g. B8 & C3, and C18 is duplicated.

The drop-down menu for Age will use LIA, ERB, MRB, LRB, SAX and U (uncertain).

Logistically, three persons will handle the work – one handling and weighing the sherds, and feeding them to the expert for identification, whilst the database operator fills in the spreadsheet.

2.   Late Iron Age and Romano-British pottery fabric types

The fabric codes employed in analysing pottery artefacts retrieved in a survey shall be fully compatible with the fabric 'type' series compiled for Northamptonshire by J.R.Perrin, E.MacRobert and P.Aird (Northamptonshire Archaeology Unit and English Heritage Central Archaeology Service).

This series was developed mainly for processing pottery from sites in Northamptonshire such as the major excavation of the Roman Small Town at Ashton, near Oundle, the Raunds Landscape Survey Project and the Stanwick Roman Villa and settlement excavation.

This ceramic framework shall be used to classify finds on all CLASP projects, so as to guarantee compatibility between the project's data and other major regional data sets. It will allow a consistent approach to sherd identification, chronological outline and site assemblage related profiles, permitting accessible comparative interrogation of the different project findings.

The system divides the fabrics into four main categories, each of which is then subdivided into recognised wares as required. The four generic categories are:

■ **A: Grogged Tempered wares**
Contains inclusions of crushed low-fired clay
■ **B: Calcite Shell-gritted Tempered wares**
Contains calcite inclusions of crushed shell derived from limestone
■ **C: Reduced (grey) wares**
Produced in a low-oxygen atmosphere resulting in a grey *or black fabric*
■ **D: Oxidised (cream/white/orange/red) wares**
Produced in a high-oxygen atmosphere resulting in white, buff, orange or red fabric

The subdivisions of wares shown in the fabrics table relate to a known source, a variety of inclusion, surface treatment, texture or colour.

NB: The fabric types identified in the table do not represent the entire Northants type series.

3. LIA and Romano-British pottery chronology

The date ranges ascribed to the pottery distributions are derived mainly from the county fabric series. However to make the date span of certain wares more accurate for the survey area, some ranges have been adjusted to reflect the chronological profiles indicated in excavation reports of Romano-British sites in the immediate vicinity of the survey area.

The nature of the pottery assemblages recovered from field-walking, and the lack of sherds whose forms can be easily identified and whose fabric are well researched, makes it extremely difficult to give very precise dates both for particular areas of a settlement and for individual features subsequently identified during geophysical survey. Unfortunately the relationship between material recovered from the plough soil and artefactual residues present in undisturbed archaeological contexts is not easily explained or understood. Therefore the sherds must be regarded as residual and their potential date must reflect the full period of use and availability of the different fabrics.

However it is possible to divide the field-walking assemblages into three main chronological phases representing the broad divisions of early, middle and late Roman periods. Although each phase covers a significant number of years, these time-frames do permit a degree of site interpretation; and upon such interpretation, issues of general settlement chronology, classification, development and temporal shifts can be explored and applied to individual sites or settlements across a regional landscape.

PHASE 1: The earliest phase covers the invasion, conquest and initial period of Romanisation from the mid 1st century AD until the mid 2nd century AD. It is typified by the manufacture of hand made and wheel thrown locally produced/marketed wares and the availability of some luxury fine ware imports.

In addition, the range of 'grogged' fabrics enable this early phase to be further sub-divided into two distinct epochs:

PHASE 1a: The conquest era under Julio/Claudian and early Flavian emperors;

PHASE 1b: The beginnings of Romanisation from the late Flavian period on into the reigns of Trajan and Hadrian.

The pottery assemblages allow the possibility to explore issues of continuity from the late Iron Age into the Roman period, and to identify the developing nature of settlement during this transitional phase.

PHASE 2: The middle Roman phase focuses on the considerable change and development of Roman Britain into a flourishing Romanised province during the Hadrianic, Antonine and Severan phases from the early middle 2nd century AD to the 3rd century AD. This period was reflected in the rise of mass produced wheel thrown regional pottery fabrics, and the increase in luxury imported tableware and specialist vessels from the wider empire.

PHASE 3: The late Roman period covers the years of major social and economic change of the late 3rd and 4th centuries AD. This period was characterised by the expansion of major industries trading larger quantities of fine and coarse ware pottery over significant areas of Roman Britain, at the expense of locally manufactured products.

The ability to date by diagnosis at least 65% of all sherds recovered from field-walking establishes a reliable quantitative statistical basis for viewing distribution patterns across settlements, identifying focal points of activity that can be associated with the major chronological phases of occupational activity and to chart with increasing confidence the story of Roman settlement in the survey area.

POTTERY FABRICS BY TYPE

Diagnostic Manufactured Wares Gen. Description

A : Grogged Wares

FABRIC	DESCRIPTION
A	General grogged
A1	Hard cream grogged
A2	Soft pink grogged
A3	Buff/pink grogged; harder
A4	Reddish yellow surfaces, grey core, black
AB	Grog with shell temper

B : Calcite-Shelly Wares

FABRIC	DESCRIPTION
B	General shelly
B1	Reddish-yellow, 'soapy', some large shell
B2	Red/dark brown/black, 'soapy', small shell
B4	Hard buff/yellow/grey
B5	Bourne/Greetham shelly
B6	Hard reddish-yellow/buff/pink
B7	Red/dark brown/black, fairly soft
B9	Shell with noticeable limestone
B10	Hard, very small 'crushed' shell

C : Reduced or Greywares

FABRIC	DESCRIPTION
C	Unclassified reduced
C1	Lower Nene Valley, slipped
C2	Lower Nene Valley, 'fumed'
C4	Local: grey surfaces with paler core
C5	Local grey/brown soft sandy
C6	Grey with black burnished surfaces, soft
C7	Fine micaceous grey
C8	BB1
C9	Grey microfossil; can have oxidised surfaces
C10	Coarse, hard grey
C11	Local: dark grey surfaces with paler core
C15	Grey with reddish yellow core
C16	Grey with grey/reddish yellow 'sandwich' core
C17	Cream-light grey 'sandwich' core, dark grey
C18	Coarse, hard grey/grey-brown
C21	Imitation BB1
C22	BB2
C23	Imitation BB2
C24	Grey with oxidised surface
C18	Coarse, hard grey/grey-brown

FABRIC	DESCRIPTION
C27	Oxford grey
C29	Hadham grey

D : Oxidised Wares

FABRIC	DESCRIPTION
D	Unclassified oxidised
D1	Lower Nene Valley cream/pink colour-coat
D2	Lower Nene Valley/Midlands cream self-coloured
D3	Reddish-yellow, soft, burnished
D4	Oxford red colour-coat
D5	Hadham/Essex reddish yellow
D6/D9	Local/Verulamium/Oxford cream
D8	Hard, fine white/cream – Midlands manufacture
D10	Hard, fine white/cream; thin burnished, Gallo-belgic
D11	Central Gaulish colour-coated
D12	Lower Rhineland colour-coated
D14	'rhenish' ware; moselkeramik
D16	Local/Oxford reddish yellow
D17	Local fine reddish-yellow, can have buff or grey
D21	Lower Nene Valley white/pink/cream self-coloured
D22	Lower Nene Valley colour-coated (grey core)
D24	Lower Nene Valley colour-coated (orange core)
D25	Reddish-yellow/grey (with mica-gilt surface)
D27	Oxfordshire white/cream (inc parchment)
D28	Mancetter-Hartshill cream
D29	Colchester buff/cream
D40	Samian
D50	Amphora

POTTERY FABRIC TYPES BY DATE

FABRIC	DATE RANGE
A	Mid 1st to early 2nd century AD
A1	Late 1st to mid 2nd century AD
A2	Mid 2nd to 4th century AD
A3	Late 1st to mid 2nd century AD
A4	Mid 1st to early 2nd century AD

FABRIC	DATE RANGE
AB	Mid 2nd to 4th century AD
B	1st to 4th century AD
B1	Mid 1st to early 2nd century AD
B2	Mid 1st to early 2nd century AD
B6	Late 1st to mid 2nd century AD
B7	Late Iron Age

FABRIC	DATE RANGE
C	Mid 2nd to 4th century AD
C1	Mid 2nd to late 3rd century AD
C2	Mid 2nd to late 3rd century AD
C4	2nd to 3rd century AD
C6	Late 1st to mid 2nd century AD
C7	Mainly early/mid 2nd century AD
C8	Mid 2nd to 4th; mainly 3rd/4th century AD
C9	Late 1st to mid 2nd century AD
C11	Early/mid 2nd to mid 3rd century AD
C15	Early/mid 2nd to mid 3rd century AD
C16	Early/mid 2nd to mid 3rd century AD
C17	Early/mid 2nd to mid 3rd century AD
C18	Mid 2nd to late 3rd century AD
C21	Mainly 3rd century AD
C22	Mid 2d to 3rd mid century AD
C23	Mid 2nd to 3rd century AD
C24	Mainly 2nd century AD
C27	Early/mid 2nd to 3rd century AD

FABRIC	DATE RANGE
D	Mainly 2nd century AD
D1	Late 2nd to 4th century AD
D2	2nd to mid 3rd century AD
D4	Later 2nd to 4th century AD
D5	Mainly 4th century AD
D6/9	Late 1st to 2nd century AD
D11	Mid-late 2nd century AD
D12	Mid-late 2nd century AD
D14	Late 2nd to 3rd century AD
D16	Early 2nd to 3rd century AD
D22	Mainly mid 3rd to 4th century AD
D24	Mainly mid 3rd to 4th century AD
D27	Mainly 3rd to 4th century AD
D28	2nd to 4th century AD
D40	Late 1st to early 3rd century AD