

## TL DATING SERVICE AT THE DURHAM TL LABORATORY

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We have established a commercially based TL ceramic dating service with the aid of a grant from the Nuffield Foundation and expect it to be fully operational this summer. The service work will proceed in parallel with existing dating research in the laboratory and may include TL research work not specifically related to archaeological ceramics. The Service has been initially structured to cater for the needs of British archaeologists, although we think that the fundamental approach would be appropriate to most TL dating laboratories. Two levels of accuracy are offered as part of a two tier service. The first, survey dating, will offer limited accuracy in the region of  $\pm 20\%$  (overall accuracy,  $1\sigma$ ), intended to provide chronological markers for a site and to test the suitability of samples for further TL measurements. Subject to satisfactory survey results, samples from a site may be considered for a dating programme, which offers the currently accessible range of accuracy of between  $\pm 5 - \pm 10\%$  (overall accuracy,  $1\sigma$ ) for single dates. A minimum number of sherds from levels that cover the range of occupation of the site will be recommended for such a programme. We hope that the availability of low cost dating within a short processing time - we expect to better one month for survey dates - will prove attractive. For a limited period we will be offering three survey dates for L100; thereafter L60 for single survey dates. It will provide us with the opportunity to rapidly screen samples for high accuracy dating and provide a convenient first stage at which to halt work should problems be evident. While the cost of survey dating will be within normal excavation budgets, the cost of a dating programme will be beyond most. However, an important element of the Service will be to assist the archaeologist with a grant proposal for a research dating programme based on survey results and its relevance discussed in the light of archaeological evidence.

We consider that a two tier system is necessary to achieve adequate turnover, and thus commercial viability. However, it also has the potential to provide TL data on a much wider variety of ceramics than would be the case for specialized research projects. Survey dating is not intended to serve solely as a prerequisite for dating programmes and TL dates for early, middle and late phases of a site would provide a useful aid to the interpretation of site chronology.

If you would like further details of the Service, please write to us.

**DUR TL** THERMOLUMINESCENCE  
 DATING &  
 RESEARCH SERVICE

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