Identifying Your Small Finds

Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS)
The Portable Antiquities Scheme encourages the voluntary recording of archaeological objects found by members of the public in England and Wales. There are 863,000+ objects recorded so far.

Your can search for finds recorded by the PAS for your own research: http://finds.org.uk/database
You can filter or refine your search using the links on the right-hand side of the results page.

Often artefact records will refer to a book or article that lists detailed identifications.

Also useful is the advanced search:
http://finds.org.uk/database/search/advanced

You can also search in an area, by drawing a box around it on a map:
http://finds.org.uk/database/search/spatial

And you can search by postcode:
http://finds.org.uk/database/search/postcode

There is a useful volunteer recording guide available for many common objects including general information on materials, methods of manufacture, decorative styles and how to measure and photograph objects properly:
http://finds.org.uk/guide

Your local PAS Liaison Officer records finds in your area. If you are conducting an archaeological dig they may not be able to identify your finds for you because they don’t have the resources available to take on such a large task. But they may be able to advise on how best to identify your finds yourself, or where to seek expert help. You can find your local contact here:
http://finds.org.uk/contacts

Websites & Online Resources
Searching online for websites and documents will assist you in identifying your finds. There are far too many different types of artefacts to give references for them all, but here are some websites to get you started:

Buckles AD 1250-1800

Crotal Bells by Rod Blunt
http://www.ukdfd.co.uk/pages/crotal-bells.html

Online Database of British Military Buttons
http://asahelena.wix.com/militarybuttons

Historic Glass Bottle Identification & Information Website
http://www.sha.org/bottle/
Evolution of Clay Pipes Tobacco Pipes in England by Cambridge Archaeology Field Group!
http://www.cafg.net/docs/articles/claypipes.pdf

An Atlas of Medieval Combs from Northern Europe by Steven Ashby
http://intarch.ac.uk/journal/issue30/ashby_index.html

Scandinavian and Anglo-Scandinavian Brooches
http://www.academia.edu/315585/Culture_and_Gender_In_the_Danelaw_Scandinavian_and_Anglo-Scandinavian_Brooches

Archaeometallurgy Datasheets (introductions to metalworking residues)
http://www.hist-met.org/datasheets.html

York Archaeological Trust – free out-of-print publications of York finds
http://www.yorkarchaeology.co.uk/resources/pubs_archive.htm

A Basic Bibliography for Studying Romano-British Small Finds
http://www.barbicanrra.co.uk/shopimages/Documents/A_Basic_Bibliography.doc

Books & Articles
You might have trouble getting hold of some of these yourself, so it’s worth asking your Researcher to help you, if needed.

Benet’s Artefacts of England and the United Kingdom
A good all round volume for flicking through and getting some ideas, but not all the identifications are perfectly accurate. Widely available to buy.


Finds Research Group (AD 700-1700)
If you would like to get more involved in learning how to identify finds, you can join this group that is for people interested in or researching artefacts of the Anglo-Saxon, Viking, medieval and post-medieval periods.
https://sites.google.com/site/frg7001700/