

PETROLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF IRON AGE POTTERY
FROM CARN EUNY, CORNWALL

Much of the Iron Age pottery from Carn Euny was examined in the hand-specimen. In addition, a number of representative sherds were studied in thin section under the petrological microscope, together with two containing stamped decoration. The majority of the pottery examined contains numerous small white angular fragments of felspar which protrude through the surfaces of the fabric. Thin sections were made of a variety of textures of this fabric, ranging from the finer wares F 118, to the medium F 153 and F 737, and coarser pottery F 657 ('Cordoned ware'), HA 19 and HA 98. The most prominent inclusions are made up of large angular grains of altered felspar and fibrous aggregates of pale green or colourless amphibole. A little pyroxene and quartz are also present. The distinction made here between fine and coarse wares appears merely to reflect the difference in size, and to some extent frequency, of the non-plastic inclusions. The mineralogy closely resembles Peacock's description of the gabbroic clays of the Lizard peninsular (1969, 146) and there seems little doubt that this type of clay was used for the greater part of the pottery at Carn Euny, as appears to be the case with many of the Iron Age sites in Cornwall (ibid.; Williams, 1976).

Sherd F 737 should be singled out for comment as it contains a scheme of lozenge pattern decoration similar to examples known from Brittany (see above). Petrologically, however, the

thin section is similar to the rest of the group.

The other major fabric class at Carn Euny is represented by a series of upright rimmed jars and stamped decorated sherds in a hard, dark brown to black, conspicuously micaceous fabric. Thin sections were studied of sherds F 10, F 68, F 263, F 276, F 736 and F 751. This material has a distinctive appearance in thin section. It contains large fragments of coarse-grained tourmaline-granite; scattered throughout the fabric are large discrete grains of feldspar (mostly orthoclase), tourmaline and plentiful flecks of mica. Frequent grains of quartz are also usually present. All the samples are very similar in thin section, suggesting the possibility that they were made in the same area.

Carn Euny is situated on the Lands End Granite, much of which has been subjected to various degrees of tourmalinisation, and so the pottery examined may well reflect localized production. However, the form of the upright rimmed jars and the La Tène stamped decoration, especially that on sherd F 736, have definite Breton parallels. Much of the Armorican Massif also contains large outcrops of granite, and a source further afield from Cornwall cannot be ruled out. Comparative material is obviously required to see if there is a direct connection between this distinctive granite fabric at Carn Euny and similar forms in Brittany. This particular type of La Tène stamped decoration appears to be rare in the south-west of Britain, though the lozenge decorated sherd F 737 of gabbroic clay shows that some at least were made locally.

Amphora

F 765. Dressel form 1A. A thin section of this sherd shows a similar composition to Peacock's Fabric 1, with a provenance in the Caecuban and Palernian areas of Italy (1971, 164-165). The type is characteristic of the first half of the first century B.C.

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