PETROLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF SAXON POTTERY AND QUERNS FROM

RAMSBURY, WILTSHIRE

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The Saxon Pottery (A.D. Russel)

36 sherds, 4 loom weights, 6 fragments of brick or tile, and one piece of fired clay, were examined X-radiographically, macroscopically, and microscopically. The X-radiographs subgested a division into two fabrics on the presence or absence of iron ore (opaques) and this was confirmed by thin sectioning 17 samples.

abric 1 X=present

ample No Layer Iron Mica Chalk Collophane Organic Well sorted quartz Unsorted quartz

	1	55	x	х			х	x		
	2	41	Х	х			x	x		
l	3	121	Х	x		,	X .	x		
	4	97	Х.	х	x	x	` x	x	· •	
1	6	97	Х	x	х	x	x	х		
lired	8	55	х	х					x	
Brick	9	55	х	х				X -		
Brick?	10	55	х	х				x		
	13	41	х	х	x		x		X	
LW	14	55	х	х	x	x		x		
IW	15	55	х	х	х			x		
ΓW	16	55	х	х	х			x		
LW	17	55	х	х	х			x		
Fabric	2									
	5	55					x		X	
	7	41					x		х	
	11	41					x		X	
	12	5 5					. x	,	X	
		2								

The sherds were examined under a binocular microscope which revealed a minimum number of twelve vessels, with five vessels represented by orly one sherd.

Fabric 16 Vessels.Vessel 1Layer 552 sherds.Soft fabric.OS. Cxidised buff.IS & C Reduced dark grey.

Some vegetable-temper, probably chaff.

Vessel 2 Samples 1&3 Layers 55, 41, 121.

6 sherds.

Hard fabric.

OS & IS Oxidised light pink, IS wiped horizontally.

C reduced grey.

Copious chaff temper.

Vessel 3 Sample 2 Layer 41.

1 sherd.

Hard fabric.

OS Oxidised light grey.

IS reduced black, wiped.

Copicus chaff temper.

Vessel 4 Sample 6 Layer 97. 10 sherds. Soft fabric. OS reduced, some oxidised parts. IS Oxidised dark orange. Some chaff temper. -2-

Vessel 5 Sample 4 Layer 97.

1 sherd.

Hard fabric.

OS, IS & C, reduced light grey to black, 1 buff patch.

IS wiped with fingers up to the neck.

OS burnished.

Some chaff temper.

Vessel 6 Sample 13 Layer 41. . 3 sherds.

Hard fabric.

OS Oxidised, with thin reduced layer on top.

IS & C reduced.

IS & OS burnished.

Chail temper.

<u>Fabric 2</u> 6 vessels, Vessel 7 Sample 5 Layer 55.

1 sherd.

Soft fabric.

OS Oxidised buff.

IS & C reduced light to dark grey. Os smoothed to slip like finish. Chaff tempered.

Vessel 8 Sample 7 Layer 41.

2 sherds.

Hard fabric.

Rim CS Oxidised, orange, burnished. IS reduced, grey, burnished. Ease OS Oxidised, orange, burnished.

IS reduced, grey, burnished.

Chaff temper.

Vessel 9 Sample 11 Layer 41.

3 sherds.

Soft fabric.

OS & IS Oxidised.

C reduced.

IS & OS rim burnished.

OS body burnished.

Chaff tempered.

Vessel 10 Sample 12 Layer 55.

5 sherds.

Hard fabric.

OS Oxidised then reduced.

IS & C reduced.

OS burnished horizontally.

Is burnished horizontally and some vertically.

Chaff temper.

Vessel 11 Layer 41.

1 sherd.

Hard Fabric.

OS reduced dark brown, burnished.

IS & C reduced black.

Chaff temper.

Vessel 12 Layer 55.

1 sherd.

Hard fabric.

OS, IS & C reduced black.

OS ?burnished(may be modern ?trowel)

Copious chaff temper.

Loomweights Samples 14, 15, 16, 17 Layer 55.

All four loomweights are made in fabric 1 with the addition of flint fragments.

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Fired Clay Samples 8, 9, 10, Layer 55.

six fragments of fired clay. Hard, well fired, badly wedged light orange and pink oxidised fabric. All fabric 1, possibly brick or tile. One fragment of fired clay, Sample 8. Reduced grey on one side, black on the other. Pieces of Iron ore adhering to black surface, which also bears the impression of burnt out plant material. Possibly furnace lining.

Geological source of clay

Fabric 1 is probably from the nearest clay source to the site. The loomweights were made from this clay, and one would expect them to be made from the most convenient clay, as it serves only as a weight and its firing and working characteristics are not important. The most likely source is the clay with flints 1km to the north of Ramsbury. This clay is formed from Eocene deposits that have been leached down and redeposited around the flints of the dissolved chalk below them.

Fabric 2 had no distinguishing characteristics microscopically so a heavy mineral analysis was conducted with one sherd from vessel 10 (sample 12). This yielded Tourmaline, Andalusite and Zircon in approximately equal quantities with Kyanite and Stauralite present. This suggests a tertiary deposit, either clay with flints or the Reading beds. The lack of chalk and the unsorted quartz makes the Reading Beds more likely. The nearest deposit of Reading beds lies on the clay with flints south of Chilton Foliat in Brick kiln copse (SU321695) within 5km. This could mean the clay was imported to the site, or else a potter, perhaps working at Chilton Foliat, was trading his wares to Ramsbury.

Quernstones (D.F. Williams)

Several fragments of a grey, fairly coarse, vesicular basaltic lava, containing conspicuous dark phenocrysts of augite. In thin section the most prominant minerals are green or occasional colourless clinepyroxene, mainly augite, set in a groundmass of small lath-shaped crystals of andesine/labradorite felspar, opacite and some xenomorphic nepheline. The composition and character of the minerals is paralleled in the basaltic lavas of the Mayen-Niedermendig area of the Eifel region, and the Ramsbury lava querns were undoubtedly imported from this part of Germany. It is difficult petrologically to differentiate between a source at Mayen or Niedermendig, though on archaeological grounds it seems likely that the early date of the Ramsbury samples indicates that they originated from the Bellerberg lava flow near Mayen (Biddle, 1964, 82).

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Biddle, M.

(1964) 'The excavation of a Motte and Bailey Castle at Therfield, Hertfordshire', <u>J. British Arch</u>. <u>Assoc</u>., 27(1964),53-91.