

ANCIENT MONUMENTS LABORATORY

REPORT

3549

SERIES/No	CONTRACTOR
AUTHOR	D F Williams Nov 1981
TITLE	Petrological examination of pottery from Castle Dore, Cornwall

PETROLOGICAL EXAMINATION OF POTTERY FROM CASTLE DORE, CORNWALL

D.F. Williams, Ph.D.,

(DOE Ceramic Petrology Project)

Department of Archaeology, University of Southampton

Nine small sherds from Castle Dore, considered likely to be of a non-local origin, were submitted for examination in thin section under the petrological microscope. The primary object of the analysis was to see if the individual sherds, the majority of which are very weathered, could be identified and provisionally dated.

Results

1. (97). Amphora
2. (169). Amphora
3. (unmarked). Amphora
4. (unmarked). Amphora

All four sherds are quite distinctive in thin section, each containing frequent grains of aegirite, quartz, feldspar and volcanic rock, with some accessory garnet. This mineralogy is indistinguishable from that associated with certain Italian Dressel 1sp and 2-4 wine amphorae (Peacock, 1971, Fabric 1), and it would appear highly likely that the Castle Dore sherds belong to one or other of these amphorae types. It can be difficult to differentiate between featureless bodysherds of Dressel 1 and the later 2-4 variety, and this is certainly the case with the Castle Dore material. The latter sherds, therefore, have to be fairly flexibly dated, sometime between the mid second century B.C., with the first appearance of the Dressel 1A form, and the mid second century A.D., the closing date of the Dressel 2-4 type.

5. (unmarked). Amphora

Thin section study revealed a matrix of frequent quartz grains, flecks of mica and some feldspar, giving no indication of origin or form.

6. (unmarked). Amphora

Thin sectioning shows a matrix containing frequent quartz grains, with some feldspar, hornblende and sandstone, giving no indication of origin or form.

7. (128). Amphora

Both in the hand-specimen and in thin section, this sherd closely resembles the fabric of the Catalan wine amphora Dressel 1 - Pascual 1. This form of amphora, only recently recognized in Britain, probably dates from the late first century B.C. to early first century A.D. (Williams, 1981). Castle Dore is the most westerly find-site so far recorded, the others being Bagendon (Gloucestershire), Poundbury, Hengistbury Head and Cleavel Point (Dorset), Owslebury (Hampshire), Knighton (Isle of Wight) and Thaxted (Essex).

8. (A 338' x 6'' x 13'').

In thin section practically all that can be seen are numerous quartz grains and flecks of mica, giving no indication of origin or form.

9. (129). Cordoned ware

This is a sherd of late Iron Age cordoned ware. Thin sectioning shows frequent grains of altered plagioclase feldspar, colourless or brown amphibole, commonly in the form of fibrous aggregates, a little pyroxene and quartz. The mineralogy is identical to Peacock's (1969) description of the gabbroic clays of the Lizard peninsula, and this would appear to be the origin of the Castle Dore sample.

Comments

Six out of the nine sherds examined can be shown to belong to

the pre-Roman or early Roman period.

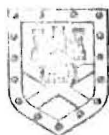
References

- Peacock, D.P.S. (1969) 'A contribution to the study of Glastonbury ware from south-western Britain', Antiq. J., 49(1969), 41-61.
- Peacock, D.P.S. (1971) 'Roman amphorae in pre-Roman Britain', in Jesson, M. and Hill, D. (eds.), The Iron Age and its Hill-Forts, (Southampton, 1971), 161-188.
- Williams, D.F. (1981) 'The Roman amphora trade with late Iron Age Britain', in Howard, H. and Morris, E. (eds.), Production and Distribution: a Ceramic Viewpoint, BAR Int. Series 120(1981), 123-132.

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

Mrs Henrietta Miles, B.A., (now Quinnell)
FSA
Staff Tutor in Archaeology

HQ/AMW



Gandy Street,
Exeter
EX4 3LZ
Tel. 77911 Ext. 752

6 October 1981

Department of Extra-Mural Studies

Dr. D. Williams,
Department of Archaeology,
University of Southampton,
Southampton SO9 5NH

Dear David,

About four years ago I sent you a small selection of possible non-local sherds from Castle Dore, in the hope that you could produce some positive identifications. I am wondering whether, as the quantity involved is very small, you might be able to do something about them quite soon. There are two reasons involved. Firstly, Truro Museums will want them back. Secondly, Daphne Harris has written a very good résumé arguing an Iron Age date for the suggested 'Arthurian' structures at Castle Dore, which we would like to publish in Cornish Archaeology. However, I would not like to publish this without firm comment on the pottery. We are also hoping to get modern comments on the beads, one of which was said to be post-Roman. We would be most grateful if you could help us out.

Yours sincerely,

Henrietta

*Supported by the
petrology.*