

Arch Report
by A.M.L. to A.M.L.

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Some Crucible Fragments from Cirencester

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Five fragments were examined and the deposits on them analysed qualitatively by x-ray fluorescence. Nos. 1 and 2 had been used to melt copper alloys, Nos. 3 and 4 had been used in gold working and No. 5 had no trace of metal detectable.

1. X VIII A 9 2138

A rim sherd with an internal diameter of about 4 cm. Inside was a massive deposit of corroding metal, a leaded gunmetal (Cu + Sn + Zn + Pb).

2. CIR 64 C II 18 11

A rim sherd with an internal diameter of about $2\frac{1}{2}$ cms. The inner surface was covered by a continuous vitreous layer in which were trapped metal droplets. Analysis suggests the metal being melted was brass (Cu + Zn) though small amounts of tin and lead were also detected.

3. CIR 64 C II 16

A rim sherd with an internal diameter of $2\frac{1}{2}$ -3 cms. Both surfaces showed slight vitrification and in the inner glassy layer were trapped a few tiny droplets of gold suggesting that this was the metal being melted here.

4. CIR 64 C II 18

A small rim sherd, probably from a flattish, disc-shaped crucible. The thick (1 mm) vitreous layer was black in colour and contained many droplets of gold. It lay on the upper/inner surface of the crucible. These disc-shaped crucibles are being recognised with increasing frequency on both Roman and early mediaeval sites. In all cases they seem connected with the working of precious metals (gold or silver) though their exact function is not yet clear.

5. CIR 64 C II 16 6

Rim sherd of about 3 cm. internal diameter. This was probably made as a crucible but shows no sign of having been used as such.

The metal melting crucibles are all of the same form, a pot with maximum diameter a little greater than that of the rim, which is beaded. By comparison with more complete examples from other sites I would expect them to have had an incipient pedestal base. The fabrics are fine sandy wares, sufficiently refractory for their purpose.