

PETROLOGICAL EXAMINATION OF ROMAN POTTERY

FROM PRESTATYN, CLWYD

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Introduction

Two sherds of coarse pottery from the Roman civil settlement at Prestatyn were submitted for a detailed fabric analysis in thin section under the petrological microscope. The main object of the analysis was to confirm the validity of a provisional fabric identification in the hand-specimen by the excavation team. The first sherd was thought possibly to be Malvernian ware (e.g. Peacock, 1967), while the second was thought to contain inclusions of mudstone or siltstone. Munsell colour charts are referred to, together with free descriptive terms. Prestatyn is situated on Coal Measures, Chert Beds and Dyserth Limestone, overlaid to a large extent by Boulder Clay, and with deposits of Mottled Sandstone and Millstone Grit nearby (1" series Geological Survey Sheet 95).

Petrology and Fabric

(1) MA 84.295 Fabric M1 DWg No.6

Fairly hard, smoothish fabric with a slightly 'soapy' feel, containing frequent light coloured angular inclusions of an argillaceous nature, dark grey (7.5YR N5/ - 5Y 3/1) surfaces, black core. Thin sectioning reveals frequent

angular inclusions of grog (crushed up pottery), together with some grains of quartz, a few clay pellets, sandstone and flecks of mica. Due to the nature of grog-tempering it is difficult to suggest a likely origin for this sherd. As far as the writer is aware, grog-tempering in pottery is not common during the Roman period in this part of Wales.

(2) MA 84.100 Fabric R5

Soft, rough sandy fabric, buff (7.5YR 7/4) colour throughout. Thin sectioning shows a groundmass of subangular quartz grains up to 0.20mm across in size and flecks of muscovite mica, together with a sparse scatter of slightly larger quartz grains, some reddish-coloured clay pellets, ?epidote, sandstone, and a fragment of ultra-basic rock. A heavy mineral separation produced a suite dominated by grains of pyroxene. The diversity of inclusions present in this sherd strongly suggest that the materials used came from the drift. Boulder Clay deposits occur locally and may be the source for this vessel.

Reference

- Peacock, D.P.S. (1967) 'Romano-British pottery production in the Malvern district of Worcestershire', Trans. Worcestershire Arch. Soc., 1(1965-67), 15-28.