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### Introduction

Small samples from seven Iron Age vessels illustrated by Wheeler (1943) in his report on the 1930's excavations at Maiden Castle, were submitted for a detailed fabric examination in thin section under the petrological microscope. In addition, heavy mineral separation was carried out on each of the sample sherds. The material analyzed was selected from a range of vessels which stretch chronologically at Maiden Castle from the late Iron Age 'A' phase to the Romano-Belgic period. In the hand-specimen all seven sherds appeared to be in a fairly similar fabric to the Durotrigian late Iron Age 'C' pottery shown to have been made in and around the Wareham - Poole Harbour Tertiary sands area of Dorset (Williams, 1977). This distinctive pottery developed in the later first century A.D. into the 'black-burnished' ware (BB1) which proved so popular during the Roman period (ibid.).

The main object of the examination of the Maiden Castle pottery was twofold: (1) to characterize the fabric of the selected sherds to see if they are homogeneous or if there are any noticeable variations in the paste, and (2) to see if the source or sources can be suggested, and how many of these vessels can be attributed to an origin in the Wareham - Poole Harbour area. All of the sherds were initially studied macroscopically with the aid of a binocular microscope (x 20). Munsell colour charts are referred to together with free descriptive terms. Maiden Castle is situated on the Upper Chalk, closeby to Valley Gravels.

Petrology and Fabric

- 1). MC B9 (7A). Bowl from a late A pit (B9). Fig. 59, no. 56.
- 2). MC D RV (7). Plain-rimmed cooking-pot from an early to mid A level on site D.  
Fig. 59, no. 63.
- 3). MC B 23 (6). Early form of bead-rim on a pot with the red haematite coating of the A tradition. With A and early B pottery in a pit (B23) on site B. Bi, c. 50 B.C., Fig. 66, no. 96.
- 4). MC Pit 12 (2) (G4A) Site G. Brown ware, rough and slightly angular bead, incised double-wave pattern. From a pit (G4A) on site G. Early Bii, last quarter of the first century B.C., Fig. 66, no. 97.
- 5). MC (3B) 1492 RV. Pot of notably gritty grey ware, from an early Bii level on site H. Soon after 25 B.C., Fig. 66, no. 103.
- 6). MC B 38 (5). Flat-rimmed pot of brownish-grey ware with lug handle pierced vertically. From a Romano-Belgic level on site B, c. A.D. 45-65.  
Fig. 74, no. 224.
- 7). MC O Rampart (2) 77. High-shouldered vessel of brownish-grey ware with grooved rim and three wavy bands incised round the shoulder. From the Romano-Belgic level on the rampart of the hornwork at the eastern entrance. Fig. 75, no. 232.

In the hand-specimen all the above vessels appear in a hard, rough sandy fabric, mostly dark grey to very dark grey (2.5YR 4/ - 3/) in surface colour, though no. 2 is light reddish-brown (5YR 6/3) and no. 3 has a darker reddish-brown (2.5YR 4/4) outer surface. In fresh fracture all of the sherds display a distinctive-looking paste, consisting of frequent light coloured angular quartz grains set against a black or very dark grey background, presenting a 'cod's row' appearance. Thin sectioning shows that all the samples are reasonably similar in fabric, containing frequent subangular quartz grains ranging up to about 1.80mm in size, with flecks of mica and a little shale, mudstone, flint, quartzite and calcite, set in a

fairly clean anisotropic reddish-brown clay matrix. This range of non-plastic inclusions and their texture closely resembles later BB1 'waster' sherds from a number of likely production sites in the Wareham - Poole Harbour area of Dorset, although some of the Maiden Castle sherds are slightly coarser-grained. This is confirmed by the heavy mineral results, all of which produced suites of heavy minerals in which tourmaline dominates the assemblage, suggesting the Tertiary sands of the above mentioned region (cf. Williams, 1977).

#### Comments

The petrological results obtained from this small sample of pottery strongly suggests that all the vessels examined were made in the Wareham - Poole Harbour area. The distribution of pottery from this area to Maiden Castle seems to have begun at least as early as Wheeler's early to mid 'A' phase on site D (e.g. sample no. 2). However, this small project gives no idea of the quantity of this type of pottery reaching Maiden Castle through time, and it would be interesting to see if this could be done for the current excavations. At the Dorset site of Gussage All Saints, for example, this particular Durotrigian fabric accounts for almost 70% of the total pottery assemblage, saturating the local market in the middle and later Iron Age (Gale, 1979, Group 1). While at Danebury in northern Hampshire, some distance away, pottery from the Wareham - Poole Harbour area arrived late at the site, in ceramic phases 8-9, and then only in relatively small numbers (Cunliffe, 1984, 247).

#### References

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