

MAYEN WARE VESSEL FROM ASHTON, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

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Part of the base of a jar or bowl in a hard, thick, rough gritty fabric, reddish-brown (between Munsell 2.5YR 4/6-4/8) surfaces and grey core. Thin sectioning and study under the petrological microscope reveals frequent discrete grains of quartz and felspar (mostly andesine and sanidine), with augite and some brown amphibole, trachitic lava, volcanic glass and quartz sandstone. The comparative freshness of the grains and the presence of volcanic glass strongly suggests a source in an area of recent vulcanism. There are in fact close parallels between the range of inclusions in the Ashton vessel and those attributed by Fulford and Bird (1971, Fabric 1) to Roman Mayen ware produced in the Eifel/Rhine region of Germany. In view of the similarities of fabric with the latter ware, an origin in this recently volcanic area of Germany appears highly likely for the Ashton vessel.

It is difficult to judge the exact form of the Ashton sherd with so little of the vessel remaining. Flat bases appear in Mayen ware in both jar forms and bowls (*ibid*, fig.1). Mayen ware seems to have been imported into Britain during the fourth century A.D., and has a distribution which is centred on the south and south east coasts (*ibid.*, fig.3). As far as the writer is aware, the Ashton example is the only one to have been found from the Midlands region.

Reference

Fulford, M. and  
Bird, J.

(1975) 'Imported pottery from Germany in late Roman  
Britain', Britannia, 6 (1975), 171-181.