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BB1 AND 'VECTIS' WARE FROM GILLS CLIFF AND NITON,

ISLE OF WIGHT

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### Introduction

Several sherds of likely BB1 (black-burnished ware category 1 - Gillam, 1960) together with sherds of a similar but not identical fabric, were submitted from the Roman sites at Gills Cliff and Niton, Isle of Wight, for detailed fabric analysis by thin sectioning and heavy mineral separation using the petrological microscope. The latter sherds have been named 'Vectis' ware by Dr. David Tomalin on the assumption that they may have been made locally in imitation of BB1 produced nearby at the large Dorset factory situated in the Wareham - Poole Harbour area (Williams, 1977).

### Petrology and Fabric

#### BB1

- 1) Gills Cliff, Bag 7 (Ventnor Museum). Beaded-rimmed jar.
- 2) Niton, Bag 5 sherd no. 1 (1.28). Beaded-rimmed jar/bowl.
- 3) Niton, Bag 5 sherd no. 2. Beaded-rimmed jar/bowl.
- 4) Gills Cliff midden, Bag 6 sherd no. 2 (GCQ 2'6"). Small (?) plain-rimmed vessel.

All the above sherds are in a fairly hard, very sandy fabric, burnished on the surfaces and black or dark grey in colour. Thin sectioning showed a clay matrix containing frequent grains of quartz, average size 0.20-.60mm, a little shale and some mudstone. The only sherd large enough for a heavy mineral separation, No. 1, produced a tourmaline-rich assemblage characteristic of BB1 pottery shown to have been made in the Wareham - Poole Harbour area of Dorset (Williams, 1977).

(?) 'Vectis' ware

- 5) Gills Cliff Hut, Bag 1 sherd no. 4 . Beaded-rimmed jar.
- 6) Gills Cliff Hut, Bag 1 sherd no. 6. Beaded-rimmed jar.
- 7) Gills Cliff Hut, Bag 2 sherd no. 3(B 127). Beaded-rimmed jar.
- 8) Gills Cliff Hut, Bag 3. Beaded-rimmed jar.
- 9) Gills Cliff Hut, Bag 24 sherd no. 1 (B24 A4). Beaded-rimmed jar.
- 10) Gills Cliff Hut, Bag 24 sherd no. 2 (B24 A4). Beaded-rimmed jar/bowl.
- 11) Gills Cliff Hut, Bag 24 sherd no 3 (B24 A4). Part of a base.

All the above sherds are again in a fairly hard, very sandy fabric, burnished on the surfaces and ranging in colour from black to dark grey. Thin sectioning shows that sherds nos. 5-8 contain frequent well-sorted subangular quartz grains, average size 0.20-.40mm, and a little flint. Sherd nos. 9-11 contain fewer but larger grains of quartz, up to 1.5mm across, and some pieces of limestone. The latter three sherds were too small for a heavy mineral separation but the remainder of the group produced an assemblage characterized by a relatively high percentage of kyanite, though subsidiary in amount to zircon. The tourmaline-rich assemblage of the BB1 sherds above was not noted. Kyanite is commonly found in post-Triassic rocks, the high percentage of zircon present and the degree of wear shown by the grains suggests that

the kyanite is unlikely to come from a recent river draining metamorphic kyanite bearing rocks. The sand involved could be from a post-Triassic Mesozoic or Tertiary formation, or a more recent sand derived from these. The Isle of Wight is very largely composed of such rocks and so a local origin would be in keeping with the petrological results. More work needs to be done though before the source or sources of this ware can be firmly established.

### References

- Gillam, J.P. (1960) 'The coarse pottery', in K.A. Steer 'Excavations at Mumrills Roman fort, 1958-60, PSAS, 94(1960), 113-129.
- Williams, D.F. (1977) 'The Romano-British black-burnished industry: an essay on characterisation by heavy mineral analysis', in D.P.S. Peacock (ed.), Pottery and Early Commerce (London, 1977), 163-220.