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PETROLOGICAL EXAMINATION OF SAXON POTTERY FROM WILLOUGHBY-ON-THE-WOLDS, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

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Introduction

Three sherds of Saxon pottery from Willoughby-on-the-Wolds were submitted for a detailed fabric examination in thin section under the petrological microscope. The object of the analysis was twofold: (1) to determine the rock and mineral content of the samples submitted and see if there are any noticeable fabric differences, and (2) if possible, to suggest likely source areas. The sherds were firstly studied macroscopically with the aid of a binocular microscope (x20). Munsell colour charts are referred to, together with free descriptive terms.

Petrology and Fabric

1) HB 110

2) HB 119

3) HB 122 'window urn'

All three sherds are in a fairly hard, rough sandy fabric, with visible inclusions of quartz, a little felspar and some large flakes of golden mica, normally dark grey (5YR 4/ - 7.5YR 3/) in colour. In thin section all three sherds appear to share the same range of non-plastic inclusions. These are dominated by large discrete grains of plagioclase with some potash felspar, biotite mica, quartz, a little brown amphibole and some small fragments of granite/grano-diorite.

The likely source area of the pottery is difficult to tie down. The nearest igneous formations to the find-site lie in the Charnwood Forest area (including the Mountsorrel grano-diorite) to the south-west of Leicester and the post-Tremadoc 'diorites' around Nuneaton. Alternatively, as Willoughby-on-the-Wolds is situated closeby to Boulder Clay glacial deposits it may possibly be that this pottery represents fairly locally made products, the granitic inclusions being present in the local clays due to glacial action. However, previous work on the Chalky Clays of the east Midlands has revealed comparatively few far-travelled erratics (Perrin, Davies and Fysh, 1973, 102). Similar granitic inclusions have been found in early-middle Saxon pottery from a growing number of sites (Walker, 1978; Williams, 1979), and it seems unlikely that there would be enough igneous erratics in the local drift to satisfactorily account for the scale of manufactire indicated by the above results. More work is obviously needed in order to locate the source of this distinctive Saxon Fabric.

References

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Walker, J. (1978) 'Anglo-Saxon traded pottery', in M. Todd, Studies in the Romano-British Villa, Leicester Univ. Press (1978), 224-228.

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