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The Examination of Three 'Crucibles' from Meonstoke, Hampshire

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April 1986

The three 'crucibles' examined were all small vessels made from a fairly coarse, not very refractory clay which contained amongst other inclusions, some calcareous ones. None of the 'crucibles' showed any signs of vitrification or of having been raised to particularly high temperatures, and there were no visible traces of metal either on them or in the soil which filled them. The fabric of the 'crucibles' was partially oxidised fired.

The shape of the 'crucibles' is described below:

SFM 25 VI 42 421 8 - a small vessel of approximately circular cross-section with a rounded base. The internal diameter at the rim was about 2.3 - 2.5cm and the internal depth was about 3.3cm. Its capacity, when filled to the level of the rim, was about 8.5cm³, although it could not in practice have held as much metal as this if it was a crucible.

SFM 85 VIc 1 5 - the smallest of the vessels, but again with a circular cross-section. Its base was slightly flattened. Internal diameter about 2.3-2.5cm, internal depth about 2.5cm, maximum capacity about 7.3cm³.

SFM 85 VI 421 10 - the largest of the vessels. It was again approximately circular in cross-section but it did have a flattened base. Internal diameter about 3.0 - 3.2cm, depth about 2.8cm, maximum capacity about 10.9cm³.

There was no evidence to suggest that the vessels examined had been used as crucibles. Indeed, the lack of vitrification or traces of metal and the partially oxidised fired state of the fabrics strongly suggested the opposite. The presence of calcareous material in the fabrics would almost certainly have made the vessels unsuitable for use at the high temperatures to which crucibles are exposed. No significant metals were detected during qualitative elemental analysis of the surfaces of the vessels and the soil they contained using energy dispersive X-ray fluorescence.

In conclusion, the objects examined were almost certainly not used as crucibles, and it is unlikely that they were intended for such a use.