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A NOTE ON THE PETROLOGY OF SOME PREHISTORIC POTTERY FROM EXCAVATIONS AT BROMFIELD, SHROPSHIRE, 1981-1991

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Summary

A small group of late Neolithic to Bronze Age pottery were thin sectioned and the fabrics examined. This revealed a number of different fabrics. The local sandstone was found in some sherds; igneous and sedimentary inclusions in one sherd suggested use of the local boulder clays, while Clee Hills rhyolite was also noted.

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Introduction

Nine small sherds of prehistoric pottery, ranging in date from the late Neolithic to the late Bronze Age, were submitted for a fabric examination in thin section under the petrological microscope. The sherd samples come from a series of excavations carried out on four ring ditches between 1981 and 1991 at Bromfield, Shropshire [Hughes, 1992]. The site is situated 3km north-west of Ludlow and lies in an area of Old Red Sandstone conglomerates, sandstones and marls, with Silurian limestones and Boulder Clays to the south and west, Carboniferous limestones to the east and the Clee Hills dolerite a short distance away to the north-east [Geological Survey 1" Map of England Sheet nos. 166 and 181].

Bromfield B15

[1]. P111: F268 (607) Late Neolithic. Petrology: The most prominent inclusions consist of large angular fragments of crushed quartzite, ranging up to 2.50mm in size, set in a reasonably clean clay matrix which contains a scatter of small quartz grains and flecks of mica. Unfortunately, it is difficult at the present time to suggest a possible area of origin for this sherd with any degree of confidence.

- [2]. F263 (603) Beaker (2 sherds).
- [3]. P116: F263 (601) Beaker (2 sherds).

Petrology: All four sherds share a similar fabric. This consists of a fine-textured clay matrix containing sparse silt-sized quartz grains and flecks of mica. Scattered throughout the matrix are angular pieces of grog of variable size [i.e. crushed up pottery]. On the whole, the fabric of the grog appears reasonably similar to the clay matrix of the sherd samples. Grog tempered Bronze Age pottery has already been noted at Bromfield [Stanford, 1982]. The common nature of the non-plastic inclusions makes a prediction of possible origins difficult.

[4]. P117: F263 (602) Beaker.

Petrology: This sherd also contains some small pieces of grog, but the remaining fabric is very much coarser than the Beaker pottery represented in sherd samples [2] and [3]. There is a moderately frequent amount of quartz grains scattered throughout the clay matrix, together with some flecks of mica and iron oxides. Also present is a large piece of medium-grained sandstone 4mm across, possibly a subgreywacke, made up of reasonably wellsorted subangular quartz grains, some felspar and lithic fragments. Some smaller fragments of a similar sandstone are also present. A fairly local origin is suggested by inclusions of ?subgreywacke sandstone, which are known to occur in the Old Red Sandstone of the region [Greig *et al*, 1968].

[5]. P118: F273 (617) Early Bronze Age.

Petrology: This shows a coarse-textured fabric containing frequent quartz grains generally not exceeding 0.50 in size, with the majority smaller than this, together with flecks of mica, some discrete grains of potash felspar and iron oxides. Scattered throughout are angular fragments of igneous and sedimentary rocks. These are made up of pieces of crushed calcareous sandstone, a fine-grained micaceous sandstone and a much weathered acid igneous rock. This mixture of rock inclusions strongly suggests that they came from a Boulder Clay containing drift erratics. The glacial drift of the region is known to include a wide variety of erratics [Earp and Hains, 1971; Greig *et al*, 1968].

[6]. P119: F275 (617) ?Middle Bronze Age.
Petrology: The most prominent inclusions consist of large

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angular fragments of dolerite ranging to over 5mm in size, set in a clay matrix which contains small, moderately frequent grains of quartz, some flecks of mica and a little iron oxide. Many fragments of Clee Hills rhyolite were found in much of the Bronze Age cemetery pottery recovered from the previous excavations at Bromfield (Peacock, 1982; Gelling and Peacock, 1968). This particular sherd would seem to share a similar origin.

Bromfield B10

[7]. BF 91 Trench I, F2, 1001 (2) Bronze Age. Petrology: This sherd also contains dolerite, together with several small fragments of a ?subgreywacke sandstone, set in a clay matrix which has a moderately frequent groundmass of silt-sized quartz grains, flecks of mica and some iron oxides. Probably a similar origin to sherd sample no. [6].

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