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Ancient Monuments Laboratory
Report 3/95

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Summary

Thin sectioning was undertaken on 17 samples of late Bronze Age and Iron Age pottery from the Wasperton excavations. This showed a division into a series of fabric groups. Two of these groups were made up of imported pottery that can be tied down to the Malvern Hills district of Herefordshire and Worcestershire. A large group containing both Bronze Age and Iron Age sherds was almost certainly made close to Wasperton, while a number of sherds contained a range of fairly common inclusions that are difficult to tie down to a specific location.

Author's address :-

D F Williams PhD FSA

Department of Archaeology
University of Southampton
Highfield
Southampton
SO9 5NH

A PETROLOGICAL NOTE ON LATE BRONZE AGE AND IRON AGE POTTERY FROM WASPERTON, WARWICKSHIRE

D.F. Williams, Ph.D., FSA

[English Heritage Ceramic and Lithics Petrology Project]

Department of Archaeology, University of Southampton

INTRODUCTION

Seventeen small sherds from Late Bronze Age and Iron Age vessels were submitted for a detailed fabric analysis in thin section under the petrological microscope. The main purpose of the examination was to confirm the validity of a provisional fabric identification previously carried out on the material, while at the same time to see if any useful comments might be made regarding the likely origins of the pottery. The site at Wasperton lies on Quaternary second terrace gravels of the River Avon, composed primarily of Triassic and Jurassic material, including Bunter Quartzite and flint, in a region dominated by Keuper Marl formations [Geological Survey 1" Map of England Sheet no. 200].

PETROLOGY

[1]. *Fabric L Feature 1918 Context 6617 [23]*

Late Bronze Age.

A groundmass of moderately frequent small quartz grains generally under 0.30mm in size, and shreds of mica, set in a fairly fine-texture clay matrix, with sparse large grains of quartzite sometimes ranging up to over 3.5mm across and a scatter of pieces of argillaceous material. Some of the latter appear fairly angular, which suggests they may well represent grog [i.e. crushed-up pottery], although others are reasonably well-rounded and as such are probably to be regarded as naturally occuring clay pellets.

[2]. *Fabric M Feature 1918 Context 6617 [47]*

Late Bronze Age.

A broadly similar fabric to [1].

[3]. *Fabric N Feature 1918 Context 6617 [45]*

Late Bronze Age.

Similar to [1] and [2] but slightly more sandy.

[4]. *Fabric N Feature 1918 Context 6617*

Late Bronze Age.

Moderately frequent ill-sorted quartz grains ranging up to 0.60mm in size, with some flecks of mica, large quartzite and some ?grog.

[5]. *Fabric N Feature - Context 1822*

Iron Age.

Frequent ill-sorted quartz grains ranging up to 0.60mm across, with some flecks of mica, large quartzite, a few fairly rounded pieces of flint and some elongated voids which probably once held organic material.

[6]. *Fabric N (burnished) Feature 657 Context 1666*

Iron Age.

Moderately frequent grains of quartz and quartzite, some of which range up to about 1.40mm in size, although most grains are smaller than this.

[7]. *Fabric N (burnished) Feature - Context 5016*

Iron Age.

Frequent grains of small quartz, normally under 0.30mm in size, with shreds of mica and a little cryptocrystalline limestone.

[8]. *Fabric N (burnished) Feature - Context 5016*

Late Iron Age?

Frequent grains of quartz, average size between 0.30-.60mm, together with flecks of mica, iron oxide and some rounded argillaceous material, most probably naturally occuring clay pellets.

[9]. *Fabric O Feature 1943 Context 6709*

Iron Age.

Ill-sorted grains of quartz and quartzite ranging up to 1.60 mm across, though mostly under 0.60mm, together with flecks of mica, and a few small pieces of flint. This fabric has similarities with some of the Bronze Age sherds above, but lacks the inclusions of ?grog which seems to occur in them.

[10]. *Fabric P Feature 4138 Context 7456*

Iron Age.

Frequent well-sorted subangular quartz grains generally under 0.30mm in size, with some flecks of mica, iron oxides and the odd small piece of flint.

[11]. *Fabric R Feature 67 Context 1013*

Iron Age.

This fabric shows a range of crushed igneous and metamorphic rocks similar in composition to that found in

Iron Age pottery which has been shown to have been made in the region of the Malvern Hills on the borders of Herefordshire and Worcestershire [Peacock, 1968].

[12]. *Fabric S Feature - Context 2915*

Iron Age.

Packed with frequent pieces of shelly limestone [biosparite] and calcite in a fine-textured clay matrix which contains little else but a few small grains of quartz and some clay pellets. A comparison between this thin section and those belonging to Peacock's Group B1 of Iron Age pottery from western England [1968] held in the Dept. of Archaeology, University of Southampton, shows that the fabric of the Wasperton vessel is virtually identical. Peacock suggested a Palaeozoic source for this group, probably located in the district of the Malvern Hills [*ibid.*].

[13]. *Fabric T (burnished) Feature 700 Context 1750/4*

Iron Age.

This seems to be a somewhat finer-textured version of no. [12].

[14]. *Fabric T Unstratified Iron Age.*

Similar fabric to no. [12].

[15]. *Fabric U Feature 504 Context 1505*

Iron Age.

A fine-textured clay matrix containing frequent elongate voids suggesting organic material such as grass or chaff had once been present. Also noted were a few grains of quartz and some shreds of mica.

[16]. *Fabric V Feature 3116 Context -*

Iron Age.

A similar organic tempered fabric as no. [15].

[17]. *Fabric V Feature 4115 Context 7675*

Iron Age.

Frequent well-sorted quartz grains generally under 0.30mm across, together with flecks of mica, iron oxide, organic voids and some clay pellets.

COMMENTS

The presence of distinctive large white grains of quartzite in the late Bronze Age sherds [1]-[4] and the Iron Age sherds [5], [6] and [9], suggests that this pottery may well have been made in the general area of Wasperton. These prominent large grains of quartzite, which can readily be seen in the hand-specimen protruding from a fresh fracture, may well represent pieces of Bunter quartzite which are present in the local

Quarternary deposits that surround the site. It is difficult to be absolutely certain, but some of the argillaceous inclusions also noted in the Bronze Age samples may possibly be grog.

There are a number of sherds which can certainly be identified as being imports to the site. No. [11] is a thick plain bodysherd which contains a distinctive range of igneous and metamorphic rocks that is also found in pottery made in the Malvern Hills region of Herefordshire and Worcestershire, stretching from the Iron Age through to the post-Mediaeval period [Peacock, 1967; 1968, Group A; Vince, 1977]. Samples [12]-[14] probably come from the same general area centred on the Malvern Hills, only the fabric here is quite different to no. [11] and contains shelly limestone and calcite [Peacock, 1968, Group B1].

It is difficult to suggest a specific source for the remaining sherds due to the lack of distinctiveness of the non-plastic inclusions present in their respective fabrics. On the face of it there seems no reason why they could not have been made in the general area of the site, although a source further afield is also quite possible. The most prominent inclusions in samples [7], [8], [10] and [17] are grains of quartz, with small amounts of limestone, clay pellets, flint and organic voids/clay pellets respectively. Under the microscope little else can be seen in the clay matrix for sherds [15] and [16] but voids which once contained organic material.

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