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TITLE Blackburnished ware from Bearsden,
Antonine Wall

BLACK-BURNISHED WARE FROM BEARSDEN, ANTONINE WALL

100-1000
100-1000
Superficial
Etching

A macroscopic examination was made of the black-burnished ware recovered from excavations carried out from 1973-75 at Bearsden (New Kilpatrick), believed to have been occupied only during the Antonine I period (about A.D. 142-158). In addition, six sherds were selected for heavy mineral analysis (Peacock, 1967), and Table I shows the results in terms of percentages of non-opaque minerals.

Table I

Type	Zircon	Tourmaline	Rutile	Kyanite	Andalusite	Staurolite	Garnet	Apatite	Anatase	No. grains counted
AB) Bowl, Gillam 222 ¹	75.9	6.8	4.6	2.9	-	2.8	5.7	1.3	-	517
AW) Cooking-pot, Gillam 139	81.9	4.1	3.3	3.5	.6	.6	6.0	-	-	436
BH) Cooking-pot, Gillam 127	37.7	51.4	4.5	.9	2.2	2.7	-	.6	-	513
AQ) Dish, Gillam 308	76.1	8.2	.6	-	1.3	-	13.2	-	.6	326
BJ) Dish, Gillam 316	70.9	10.7	1.4	-	.9	-	15.3	-	.8	401
BR) Cooking-pot, variation Gillam 120	63.7	6.9	5.6	2.7	2.9	3.8	9.7	2.9	1.8	287

The BB² sherds (representing possibly some 11 vessels) are all well burnished and slipped, the normal colour being either black or pinkish-grey, with the core tending to have a dark brown central zone sandwiched between two thin darker layers. All the sherds have been tempered with a medium amount of sand. The bowls (mostly Gillam 222) outnumber the cooking-pots (Gillam 139) by about 3-1. BB² vessels are outnumbered by BB¹³ (see below), as they are in Antonine I levels at Birrens (Robertson, 1975) and Castledykes (Robertson, 1964). It is only in Antonine II levels, or in undivided Antonine deposits, that BB² first occurs in excess of BB¹ in the north.

The BB² fabric at Bearsden is fairly uniform and suggests a single origin for all the sherds. The heavy mineral assemblage produced by two of these sherds (nos. 1 and 2), characterized by a high tenor of zircon combined with almost equal amounts of tourmaline and garnet, and a moderate amount of rutile, agrees very well with the analysis of a large group of BB² vessels shown to have been made at Colchester (Williams, forthcoming, Group XII). These results confirm the picture that is emerging of the origin of BB² in the north during the Antonine period. Samples of BB² analyzed from Mumrills, Newstead and now Bearsden, have all indicated a probable Colchester origin.

The BB¹ sherds from Bearsden (representing possibly some 25 vessels) are in a number of fabrics, suggesting several centres of production. BB¹ from the Wareham-Poole Harbour area

of Dorset seems to account for about half the vessels present. The fabric of these latter sherds is black, or very dark grey throughout, and contains a considerable amount of quartz sand temper. A cooking-pot rim (no.3) chosen from amongst this group was analyzed and produced an assemblage with a high tenor of tourmaline and no garnet, identical to those associated with the Dorset production centre (ibid., Group I).

Also present are a number of likely products from the Rossington Bridge kilns near Doncaster, especially a dish (NK 73 AW), which has a series of basal zig zag lines which seem to be peculiar to this centre (Williams, 1975, 299). It has been recognized for some time that the Rossington Bridge kilns were making BB1 from about the middle of the 2nd century, and were possibly connected in some way with the Dorset production area, since there are similarities of form and decoration between the wares of both centres (Farrar, 1973, 95; Williams, forthcoming). The predominant colour seems to be dark grey, the cooking-pots having a slight 'lustre' to them; less sand temper is used than is normal, for instance, in Dorset BB1.

Two of the sherds thought likely to have been made at Rossington Bridge were analyzed (nos. 4 and 5), and both produced assemblages similar to those obtained from 'wasters' from the Rossington Bridge kilns, with a fairly high percentage of garnet recorded (Williams, forthcoming, Group II). Possible Rossington Bridge BB1 has been recognized by the writer in

small amounts at Balmuildy, Bar Hill and Castledykes, though none seems to be present in the large group of BB1 from the west ditch at Mumrills (ibid.). The relatively small amount of Rossington Bridge BB1 on the Antonine Wall compared with Dorset BB1 may be due in part to that Wall's early abandonment (Hartley, 1972), before the BB1 wares from the better situated Rossington Bridge site could get properly established there.

The remainder of the BB1 fabrics appear different to those described above, with far less sand temper employed, and with rougher tooling and thickish lattice lines on the bowls and dishes. This suggests that other, smaller, production centres were also involved in making BB1 at this time. One of these sherds was analyzed (no. 6) and the resulting suite of minerals, showing a moderate amount of garnet, but with fairly high percentages of rutile and kyanite, falls into an undesignated group of BB1 vessels from Mumrills and Birdoswald (Williams, forthcoming, Group III). The cooking-pot from Mumrills in this group (unstratified from the 1928 excavations) is identical to that from Bearsden. The form is similar to Gillam 120, but lacks the wavy line decoration round the neck.

The variety of BB1 fabrics in the Antonine I levels at Bearsden clearly shows that at this time BB1 in the north was being produced by several centres. Furthermore, the main suppliers were Dorset and Rossington Bridge, and not an unknown centre in the Midlands (Hartley, 1972, 47).

1. Refers to Gillam's Types paper (1957).
2. Black-burnished Category 2 (Gillam, 1960, 126-127).
3. Black-burnished Category 1 (Gillam, 1960, 126-127).

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