Report 2331

Report for Dorset Archaeological Unit by a 3 year graduate working after finals

PETROLOGICAL EXAMINATION OF IRON AGE POTTERY FROM LITTLE SOMBORNE, HAMPSHIRE

Of 107 Iron Age fabrics submitted for examination, all were examined under the binocular microscope, and a number were examined in thin section under the petrological microscope (underlined below). Munsell Soil Colour Charts are refered to throughout.

Six fabric groups can be distinguished:

Group 1

Nos. 7, 8, 9, 14, 18, 20, 23, 27, 30, 44, 47, 48, 49, 51, 65, 66, 74a, 74b, 75, 76, 77, 78, 81, 84, 86, 87, 88, 93, 95, 99, 104, 107 and 108.

This group comprises moderately hard fabric types ranging in colour from dark grey (5-10YR 3-4/0-1) to black (2.5-7.5YR 2/). Some of the thicker sherds have reddish-brown to dark reddish-brown surfaces (5YR 3-5/3-4) due to oxidization during firing, while the occasional thinner fabrics are reddish-brown throughout.

Thin sectioning shows an optically anisotropic groundmass of fired clay containing numerous inclusions of angular or sub-angular quartz grains ranging in size from 0.15-.30mm. There is nothing to suggest that the clay is not locally derived.

Fabric Group 2 at Winklebury, Hampshire (Williams a,forthcoming), an Iron Age hill-fort site in a similar geological setting, provides a close analogy to Little Somborne's Group 1.

Group 2

Nos. 3, 10, 11, 12, 16, 21, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 39, 43, 45b, 50, 52, 55, 56, 58, 68, 69b, 71, 72, 73 80, 83, 90, 91, 94, 98/100 and 106.

In colour and hardness the fabrics in this group closely resemble those of Group 1. Examination of the sherds under the binocular microscope, however, showed distinct signs of an organic content which,in thin section,gives rise to a lower density of quartz grains relative to the groundmass. The burnt traces of grass and chaff are not found in sufficient quantities to show conclusively that they were deliberately added to the clay as temper.

Group 3

Nos. 1, 2, 15, 19, 25, 26, 28, 29, 33, 41, 46, 53, 54, 57, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 67, 69a 70, 79, 82, 89, 92, 96, 97, 101, 102, 103, 105 and 109.

The fabrics are again of moderate hardness and thickness and are generally of a dark grey to black colour (7.5YR N2-4/), frequently having reddish-brown surface tones. To the naked eye

inclusions of angular fragments of flint in varying density are clearly visible. In thin section an optically anisotropic groundmass of fired clay is seen to contain sub-angular quartz grains averaging in size from 0.05-.15mm., and much angular flint, up to 1.7mm. in size. Inclusions of iron ore and chalk are occasionally found.

Group 4

Nos. 4, 6, 38, 42, 45a and 85.

Moderately hard reddish-brown fabric containing small fragments of shell. In thin section these range from 0.10-.70mm. in size.

Group 5

No. 5

Under macroscopic examination the single fabric type of this group is not distinctive, being brown to very dark grey and moderately hard, and similar to the sherds in Group 1. However, thin sectioning reveals well rounded light brown grains of glauconite, average size 0.05-.30mm., in equal proportion to subangular quartz grains, average size 0.04-.15mm., in an optically anisotropic groundmass. The glauconitic content suggests an origin for the clay in the Reading Beds, the nearest deposits of which lie about five miles south of the site. Glauconitic fabrics have also been identified at Winklebury,

Group 3 (ibid.).

Group 6

Nos. 22 and 40.

The two sherds allocated to this group are distinguished by the very fine character of the paste.(especially no. 22). They are reddish-brown to black in colour. In thin section two average sizes of subangular quartz grains can be discerned, a) around 0.01mm. and b) around 0.10mm.

Conclusions

With the exception of the glauconitic sherd of Group 5, which need not have been imported from any great distance, all of the sherds examined could have been made at or near Little Somborne, lying as it does on the chalk. Similar fabric groupings are also to be found in a similar analysis of Iron Age pottery from Winklebury (ibid.) and Ructstalls Hill, Hampshire(Williams b, forthcoming).

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