For Bedford Corp. forthcoming monograph on excavation on site of Bedford castle.

PETROLOGY OF PRE-SAXO-NORMAN POTTERY FROM BEDFORD

Nineteen samples of pre-Saxo-Norman ware were submitted for petrological analysis. From an initial macroscopic examination, followed in each case by thin sectioning and study under the petrological microscope, seven divisions could be made on the basis of aplastic inclusions. These are listed below following the descriptions of the sherds. Munsell colour charts are referred to together with free descriptive terms.

Description of sherds

Sherd 1

Medium thick, moderately hard sandy fabric, very dark grey (5Y 3/1) throughout. Impressions of grass or chaff can be seen on the surfaces.

Sherd 2

Medium thick, hard, slightly micaceous fabric, dark grey (5YR 4/1) throughout. Both surfaces have been well burnished.

Sherd 3

Medium thick, moderately hard fabric, light brown (7.5YR 6/4) outside surface, dark grey inner surface and core. Impressions of grass or chaff can be seen on the surfaces.

Sherd 4

Medium thick, moderately hard fabric, dark grey (10YR 4/1) throughout. Moderate inclusions of limestone and shell occur throughout, and impressions of grass or chaff can be seen on the surfaces.

Sherd 5

Medium thick, moderately hard fabric, very dark grey (2.5Y N3) throughout. Inclusions of limestone occur throughout.

Sherd 6

Medium thick, moderately hard sandy fabric, dark greyish-brown (2.5Y 4/2) outside surface, black inner surface and core.

Sherd 7

Fairly thick, hard sandy fabric, black throughout.

Sherd 8

Medium thick, moderately hard sandy fabric, dark grey (2.5YR N4/) outside surface, very dark grey inner surface and core.

Sherd 9

Medium thick, moderately hard sandy fabric, dark grey (10YR 4/1) throughout.

Sherd 10

Similar to sherd 5.

Sherd 11

Thin, moderately hard fabric, very dark grey (2.5Y N3/) throughout. Numerous inclusions of shell can be seen in fracture.

Sherd 12

Fairly thick, moderately hard fabric, dark grey((2.5YR N4/) outside surface, very dark grey inner surface and core. Frequent inclusions of sand and limestone can be seen in fracture.

Sherd 13

Thick, hard sandy fabric, grey (10YR 5/1) outside surface, dark grey inner surface, black core.

Sherd 14

Thin, fairly hard sandy fabric, strong brown (7.5YR 5/6) outside surface, very dark grey inner surface and core.

Sherd 15

Thick, hard sandy fabric, light red (10R 6/6) outside surface, dark grey inner surface, light red / grey core.

Sherd 16

Fairly thick, hard moderately sandy fabric, light yellowish-brown (10YR 6/4) outside surface, very dark grey inner surface and core. Occasional small plates of shell are visible in the fabric, and impressions of grass or chaff can be seen on the surfaces.

Sherd 17

Thick, hard sandy fabric, dark grey(5YR 4/1) throughout.

Sherd 18

Medium thick, moderately hard sandy fabric, light red (10R 6/6) outside surface, light grey inner surface and darker core.

Sherd 19

Thin, moderately hard sandy fabric, grey (2.5Y N5/) throughout.

Group 1 Sherd no. 3

Thin sectioning shows abundant quartz grains, average size 0.10-.15mm., together with a number of elongate voids, in all probability representing grass or chopped chaff.

Group 2 Sherd no. 1

Thin sectioning shows numerous grains of quartz, average size 0.50-.80mm., a scatter of quartzite and a few grains of sandstone.

Group 3 Sherd no. 16

Thin sectioning confirms that the predominant temper is quartz, average size 0.30-.50mm., but with some up to 1.40mm. across, also present are fragments of fossiliferous shell and a few grains of potash feldspar.

Group 4 Sherd nos. 5,10 and 12

Thin sectioning shows inclusions of limestone, together with numerous grains of quartz, average size 0.30-.40mm., some quartzite and a few grains of potash feldspar.

Group 5 Sherd nos. 4 and 11

Fossiliferous shell inclusions predominate in thin section, fragments of (?) bryozoa and limestone are also present. The nature of the inclusions suggest that the temper is a crushed shelly limestone, possibly from the Cornbrash Deposits situated close to Bedford. If the fragments of bryozoa have been correctly identified, there may be some connection between these sherds and the beginnings of St. Neots type ware, as the occurrence of this particular fossil-type seems to be characteristic of that pottery (Hunter, forthcoming).

Group 6 Sherd nos. 2,6,7,8,9,14,15,17,18 and 19

Thin sectioning shows numerous inclusions of ill-sorted grains of subangular quartz, some up to 1.40mm. across, but the average size, 0.40-.80mm., together with a scatter of quartzite. Also present in the majority of sherds are one or two grains of feldspar (usually potash), while no. 8 contained a large fragment of flint and a piece of fossil shell.

Group 7 Sherd no. 13

Thin sectioning shows abundant quartz grains, average size 0.20-.30mm.

Conclusions

Due to the common nature of the inclusions in Groups 1, 2 and 7, it is difficult to be precise about likely areas of origin. These vessels could have been made fairly locally, possibly from the superficial Boulder Clay deposits which cover much of Bedford and the surrounding area; on the other hand a source

further afield cannot be ruled out. In Group 6, the odd grain of feldspar in the majority of sherds, in what is essentially a fairly sandy fabric, suggests the use of Boulder Clay, and therefore these sherds may well represent locally made wares. The presence of a few potash feldspar grains together with fossiliferous shell in Group 3 and limestone in Group 4, suggests an admixture of Boulder Clay with the local Jurassic material (Oxford Clay and Cornbrash). As mentioned above, the shelly limestone in Group 5 could represent the local Cornbrash.

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Hunter, R. (forthcoming) 'St. Neots type ware', in St. Peters Street Excavation Report (Northampton Development Corp., forthcoming).