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Publication reports for Anglo-Saxon pottery from Little Martins Field, Brightwell-cum-Sotwell, Oxon (BRLMF 18)

Anglo-Saxon pottery

by John Cotter

Introduction

Five sherds of Anglo-Saxon pottery weighing 80g were recovered. These represent two separate handmade vessels in organic-tempered ware which came from two contexts. Given the small size of the assemblage a separate catalogue has not been constructed and the pottery is simply described and broadly spot-dated below. None has been illustrated. Organic-tempered ware (sometimes called chaff- or grass-tempered ware) is widespread throughout the Thames valley where it mainly dates from the early to mid Anglo-Saxon period. Large assemblages of this period, with a large element of organic-tempered wares, have been excavated at other sites in Oxfordshire including Eynsham Abbey (Blinkhorn 2003) and Barrow Hills, Radley (Blinkhorn 2007), to name only the largest. Four sherds of organic-tempered Anglo-Saxon pottery were also recovered from the evaluation stage of the present excavation (details in archive).

Context (64), fill of post-medieval Ditch (145): Spot-date c 5th to 8th century?

A single small body sherd (weight 3g). External surface unburnished, possibly slightly abraded? Black fabric with dark grey-brown external surface. Fairly hard and very fine silty-sandy fabric with no visible quartz inclusions any coarser than those in the matrix. The fabric is noticeably very micaceous with abundant very fine mica inclusions throughout the matrix but especially visible on the external surface. The matrix also contains abundant fine rounded black inclusions - most probably glauconite, again most visible on the external surface. Also, moderate to abundant organic temper comprising coarse impressions or voids, up to 7mm long, left by the burning-out of chaff or grass inclusions. The high proportion of glauconite present in this sherd might suggest an alternative (prehistoric) date, but as the more complete vessel below also contains quite a bit of this, the later dating seems the more likely.

Context (2078), fill of Anglo-Saxon Ditch (2315): Spot-date c 5th to 8th century?

Four very fresh sherds (weight 77g). From a single vessel comprising two groups of joining sherds including a rim and joining shoulder sherd, and two large joining body sherds. These provide a near-complete vessel profile from a slightly squat globular jar/cooking pot with a plain everted or cavetto rim. The rim diameter is c 160mm (10% surviving circumference) while the maximum body diameter is c 210mm. The lower wall curves downwards and inwards towards the missing base. Such very simple vessel forms are ubiquitous in Anglo-Saxon pottery assemblages. It is dark grey in colour with a black external surface. Fabric very similar to the sherd from (64) described above, but somewhat coarser than the latter with frequent visible quartz inclusions up to 0.5mm across. Fine mica and glauconite inclusions as above but not so obvious or perhaps quite as frequent. Sparse red iron oxide and sparse calcareous inclusions, and possibly rare flint. Moderate to abundant organic temper comprising coarse impressions or voids including one very prominent burnt-out surface inclusion (reed or tree bark?) forming a deep rectangular impression at least 15mm long (broken) and 8mm wide. The external surface of the vessel is roughly finished and uneven, almost faceted, but with a deliberate, if patchy, burnish. The internal surface is also very roughly finished with numerous roughly horizontal wiping marks and many random marks besides. The external surface and rim are clearly sooted from use during cooking while the interior is quite clean. Ditch (2315) also contained a few sherds of residual Roman pottery.

Bibliography

Blinkhorn, P, 2003 'The Pottery', in A. Hardy, A. Dodd and G.D. Keevill, *Aelfric's Abbey: Excavations at Eynsham Abbey, Oxfordshire, 1989-92*, Thames Valley Landscapes **16**, Oxford Archaeology, 159-206.

Blinkhorn, P, 2007 'Anglo-Saxon pottery' in Chambers R and McAdam, E, *Excavations at Barrow Hills, Radley, Oxfordshire, 1983-5. Vol. 2 The Romano-British cemetery and Anglo-Saxon settlement*. Oxford Archaeology. Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph No. **25**, 229-247.