

Ancient Monuments Laboratory  
Report 27/92

A NOTE ON THE PETROLOGY OF SOME  
MIDDLE BRONZE AGE POTTERY FROM  
EXCAVATIONS AT HEATREE, MANATON,  
DEVON

D F Williams PhD FSA

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#### Summary

Six small middle Bronze Age sherds were thin sectioned from Heatree, which lies on the granite of the Dartmoor Forest. All the samples, some with "Trevisker affinities", were expected to contain the local granite, but this did not prove to be the case. Three fabric groupings were made: (1) volcanic rock - suggesting an origin in the Permian rocks around Exeter, (2) greenstone - possibly from a source around the edges of Dartmoor, and (3) granite - presumably from a fairly local source.

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A NOTE ON THE PETROLOGY OF SOME MIDDLE BRONZE AGE POTTERY  
FROM EXCAVATIONS AT HEATREE, MANATON, DEVON

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[HBMC Ceramic Petrology Project]

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Introduction

Six small, on the whole fairly friable, sherds of likely middle Bronze Age date were submitted for a detailed fabric examination in thin section under the petrological microscope. All of the sherds were initially studied with the aid of a binocular microscope [x 20]. Munsell colour Charts are referred to together with free descriptive terms. The site at Heatree is situated on the eastern side of the Dartmoor granite, about two miles south-west of North Bovey [Geological Survey 1" Map of England Sheet no. 338].

Petrology and Fabric

On the basis of the range and texture of the non-plastic inclusions present in the six sherds examined, three broad fabric divisions have been made. With this in mind, it is of particular interest to note that the

majority of the pottery appears to have been made outside of the immediate vicinity of the site.

Group 1: volcanic rock

[1]. *60d HC 3 SE quadrant outside among group of sherds.*

Hard, rough, sandy fabric with inclusions of grey rock scattered throughout, off-white surfaces [2.5Y 8/2]. This sherds displays many cracking lines suggesting that it has been subject to considerable heat - burning?

[2]. *62b HC 3 SE quadrant outside among group of sherds.*

Fairly hard, smoothish, sandy fabric with lightish grey inclusions of rock scattered throughout, dark grey [10YR 4/1] outer surface and core, light greyish-brown [between 2.5Y 6/2 and 5/2] inner surface.

[3]. *62c HC 3 SE quadrant outside among group of sherds.*

Soft, friable sherd in a rough, sandy fabric with frequent inclusions of small pieces of lightish grey rock scattered throughout. Reddish-yellow [between 5YR 7/6 and 7/8] much abraded outer surface and dark grey [between 10YR 4/1 and 3/1] inner surface and core.

Thin sectioning shows a groundmass of fairly well-sorted quartz grains mostly under 0.10mm in size, and fragments of a volcanic rock composed mainly of felspar microlites set in a dark brown altered matrix. The composition and condition of the volcanic rock inclusions suggests an origin in the Permian rocks of Devon, in particular those of the Exeter district [Tidmarsh, 1932]. A similar fabric has previously been noted by Peacock in his study of early Iron Age "Glastonbury ware" [1969, Group 6]. In addition, the writer has noted this fabric in "Trevisker-related" Bronze Age pottery from the site at Hayes Farm, closeby to Exeter [English Heritage Ancient Monuments Laboratory Report].

Group 2: greenstone

[4]. *2a HC 1 south half interior.*

Soft, abraded sherd in a sandy fabric with some scattered rock inclusions, light red [2.5YR 6/6] outer surface, very light grey [10YR 7/2] inner surface, dark grey core.

[5]. *57a HC 3 interior just above floor.*

Hard, smooth, sandy fabric with scattered rock inclusions, pale brown [10YR 7/4] surfaces, dark grey core.

In thin section, the most prominent inclusions are composed of an altered amphibole-rich rock, most probably a greenstone. Also present are frequent quartz grains and some flecks of mica. Greenstone dykes occur around the edges of the Dartmoor Forest [Reid, 1912], though it is difficult at present to suggest a likely source more closely than this.

Group 3: granite

[6]. 52g HC 3 in floor make-up at lower end, NW quadrant.

Small, crumbly, abraded sherd in a sandy fabric with grains of quartz, mica and white felspar scattered throughout, very dark grey [5Y 3/1] in colour.

Thin sectioning shows frequent grains of quartz, discrete grains of potash and plagioclase felspar, flecks of mica and some small fragments of granite. As Heatree actually lies on the granite, a source closeby would fit in with the petrology, possibly within the area of the river systems that drain from Dartmoor.

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