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A NOTE ON THE PETROLOGY OF SOME
ROMAN POTTERY FROM BEESTON CASTLE
AND CHESTER, CHESHIRE.

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Ancient Monuments Laboratory Report 234/87

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Summary

Two sherds from Beeston Castle and two from Chester were examined; a variety of origins are suggested.

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A NOTE ON THE PETROLOGY OF SOME ROMAN POTTERY FROM BEESTON CASTLE AND
CHESTER, CHESHIRE

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Introduction

Two sherds of Roman pottery from Beeston Castle were submitted for a detailed fabric examination in thin section under the petrological microscope. In addition, two sherds of Roman pottery from Chester which superficially resembled the Beeston Castle sherds were also submitted for analysis. All four sherds were initially studied macroscopically with the aid of a binocular microscope (x 20). Munsell colour charts are referred to together with free descriptive terms. Chester lies on Bunter Sandstone, while Beeston Castle, some 15 miles to the south-east, is situated on Keuper Marl. Boulder Clays are widespread in the region (Geological Survey 1" Map Sheet 109).

Petrology and Fabric

1A) Beeston Castle 0001 plain bodysherd

Hard, rough sandy fabric, very pale brown (10YR 7/4) outer surface, dark grey inner surface and core. Thin sectioning reveals a groundmass of well-sorted subangular quartz grains under 0.20mm in size, with a scatter of chert, flecks of mica and some phosphatic material, probably collophane. It is difficult to suggest a likely area of origin for this sherd.

1B) Chester '73 A(307) 2599-2601 plain bodysherd

Hard, rough sandy fabric, dark grey (10YR 4/1) outer surface and core, light red inner surface. Thin sectioning shows frequent grains of subangular quartz up to 0.50mm in size, flecks of mica and a little argillaceous material. This fabric appears to be different to Beeston Castle 0001, but the common range of inclusions makes it difficult to suggest a likely origin.

2A) Beeston Castle 0619/359 plain bodysherd

Hard, fairly smooth fabric with frequent argillaceous inclusions scattered throughout, dark grey throughout (10YR 4/1). Thin sectioning allows a closer view of the argillaceous material, which is fairly fine-grained and well-rounded and is possibly ?mudstone. Also present are some fine-grained sandstone and quartz grains. Mudstone can be found in the local Keuper Marls, so a local origin is quite possible. On the other hand, mudstone inclusions have been found in late Iron Age pottery in the Welsh Marches area (Morris, 1982) and it is possible that the Beeston Castle sherd may be connected with this material.

2B) Chester 74/5 I (3) 62 bead-rimmed cooking-pot

Hard, burnished lattice-decorated cooking-pot, very dark grey throughout (2.5Y N3/). Thin sectioning shows that this sherd contains a range of crushed igneous and metamorphic rocks similar in composition to that found in pottery shown to have been made in the Malvern district of Worcestershire (Peacock, 1967). In fact, this vessel is probably a copy of a BB1 (black-burnished category 1 form - Williams, 1977, 204).

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