

The Romano-British Pottery from BAT3EX/15

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Introduction

This report describes the Romano-British pottery from BAT3EX/15. In total 236 sherds Romano-British sherds, weighing 1.826kg (1.7EVE), were recorded from eleven contexts (Table 1). The assemblage is small and the individual groups are even smaller. The state of the material varies from fresh, unabraded sherds to tiny abraded chips and the average sherd weight of 7.7g is low. This has hindered the analysis of the pottery and the emphasis on locally produced wares, combined with the near absence of regionally traded or imported wares, means that close dating has not been possible

Methodology

The assemblage was sorted into fabrics based on major inclusion groups and vessel treatment. Where possible traded wares were identified using the *National Roman Fabric Reference Collection* (Tomber and Dore 1998), with the local fabrics described, as far as was possible, using the scheme developed by Timby (2007) following the excavations of the Brackley Hatch kilns and nearby sites. The fabrics were quantified using the standard measures of sherd count, weight and Estimated Vessel Equivalents (EVE) based on surviving rim percentages (Orton *et al.* 1993). The small size of the assemblage means that detailed statistical analysis is uninformative. A small number of diagnostic sherds are illustrated.

Fabrics

The almost complete absence of imports or regionally traded wares is surprising, but paralleled in other nearby assemblages (Timby 2007) (Table 2). A tiny chip of Central Gaulish Samian; a small, abraded Black Burnished ware sherd and what may be a piece of Late Roman shell tempered ware are the only traded wares, with the exception of Nene Valley Colour coated beakers used as grave goods in burials [32] and [36] during the third century. A bridge between traded wares and locally produced wares is provided by sherds labelled as 'Pink Grog Tempered Wares'. True PNK GT is widely distributed from the second century until the late fourth century (Booth and Green 1989). The fabric here is aberrant but close to PNK GT in its characteristics and may be a local version, or perhaps an early variant.

The locally produced wares comprise a heterogeneous group of fabrics with their antecedents in the late Iron Age, if not before. In broad terms they can be derived into fabrics distinguished by the presence of grog (GR), shell (SH) or sand (SA). In practice the situation is more complex, because there is a great deal of variation in both inclusions and firing practices. It is not always clear in a small assemblage whether these variations are related to production centres and geologies, chronology or lack of standardisation. Rather than devise a new classification it was felt preferable to adopt the fabrics defined by Timby (2007, 90-95). This approach, although finding concordances presented some difficulties, offered the most efficient and explicable means of interpreting the pottery.

Traded wares (Tomber and Dore 1998)

DOR BB1 Dorset Black Burnished Ware

LVN CC Lower Nene Valley Colour Coated Ware

PNK GT 'Pink Grog Tempered Ware'. The fabric here is atypical and may be an early or local variant.

ROB SH Late Roman Shell Tempered Ware (Harrold, Bedfordshire?)

SAM CG Central Gaulish Samian

Local wares (Timby 2007, 90-95)

Grog tempered wares

GR1 Soapy grog-tempered ware

GR2 Sandy grog-tempered ware

GR5 Orange-red grog-tempered ware

GR7 White grog-tempered ware

GR8 Sandy grog-tempered ware (Brackley Hatch kiln product?)

Sand tempered wares

SA1 Sandy ware with iron and rare calcareous inclusions

SA4 Black sandy ware with quartz

SACA Sandy ware with calcareous grains

Shell tempered wares

SH1 Shelly ware

SH5 Shell and limestone-tempered ware

SH6 Coarse shell and limestone-tempered ware

Greywares

GREY Miscellaneous greywares

GREY1 Fine grey ware

GREY2 Grey sandy ware

GREY4 Black sandy ware with buff core

GREY5 Speckled hard grey sandy ware

GREY6 Fine 'silky' grey ware

GREY8 Well-fired grey sandy ware

Other wares

SST2 Sandstone-tempered ware

SED BB1 South East Dorset Black Burnished Ware

OO Unidentified crumbs

OXID2 Sandy oxidised ware

WW1 Fine to medium white sandy ware

WW2 Fine white sandy ware

Forms

The small size of the assemblage, limited number of diagnostic sherds and dearth of complete profiles precludes detailed analysis of the forms present and their significance. The identifiable diagnostic sherds are almost all derived from jars or undifferentiated jar / bowl forms in local grog or shell tempered fabrics (Timby 2007, 89). The small number of greywares derive from finer, more 'Romanized' (for want of a better term), everted rims jars and a flask. Some of the very fine oxidised body sherds may derive from flagons or beakers and the only other drinking vessels present are two LNV CC beakers used as grave goods.

Discussion

Fill (12) of Ditch [11]

The assemblage from this ditch fill totals 59 sherds, weighing 591g (0.69EVE). Locally made grog-tempered jars dominate (P1) along with a smaller number of 'Romanising' fabrics, mainly sandy greywares but including two whiteware sherds. The greywares include a flask that can be dated from AD60-160 (P2). Shell tempered sherds are in a minority and include an abraded jar / bowl form with a bevelled internal rim that is probably Late Iron Age and residual (P3). A late first- or second-century date is appropriate for the group.

P1 Handmade, wheel finished, ovoid 'channel rim' or lid seated jar: Fabric GR1 (AD43-100) (Timby 2007, Fig 4.1.13). From Fill (12) of ditch [11].

P2 Wheel-thrown, necked flask with a cordon formed of two incised circumferential lines separating a panel of burnished diagonal lines: Fabric GREY1 (AD60-160). The form is a well-known one (for instance Davies *et al.* 1993, Fig 86.547). From fill (12) of ditch [11].

P3 Jar / bowl with bevelled internal rim: Fabric SH1 (Late Iron Age). From Fill (12) of ditch [11].

Fill (28) of ditch [27]

This ditch fill produced the largest assemblage: 120 sherds, 836 g (0.98EVE). Local grog-tempered sherds formed half the assemblage by count and included a high shouldered necked jar of early second-century date (P4) alongside large storage jars (P5 & P6). The appearance of the grog-tempered whiteware fabric with blackened surfaces GR7 (14%) is noteworthy. Shell-tempered sherds (20%) and sand-tempered sherds (4%) comprise almost a quarter of the group by count. The latter fabric includes a round bodied bowl/jar with neck cordon, which is a late first to early second-

century form (P7). The remaining fabrics include 'Romanising greywares' (6%) and miscellaneous sherds. An early second-century date is appropriate for the group.

P4 High shouldered, necked jar with slightly everted rim: Fabric GR1 (AD110-140). From fill (27) of ditch [28].

P5 Large everted rim storage jar (Timby 2007, Fig 4.5.85): Fabric GR8 (AD120-200). From fill (27) of ditch [28].

P6 Large storage jar (Timby 2007, Fig 4.5.85): Fabric GR8 (AD120-200). From fill (27) of ditch [28].

P7 Round bodied jar / bowl with slight neck cordon and internal groove: Fabric SA4 (AD70-160). From fill (27) of ditch [28].

Graves [32] and [36]

Grave [32] contained a fresh sherd from an LNV CC rouletted beaker (AD180-300) and two abraded sherds in local grog-tempered and shell-tempered fabrics that are probably residual.

Grave [36] contained the fragmentary lower part of an LNV CC rouletted beaker (AD180-300), which served as a grave good. The absence of a rim precludes close dating of the form which is probably of late second or early third century date (Howe *et al.* 1980, Fig 3.33).

Other features

The remaining features were mainly pits containing very small groups of pottery and a full catalogue can be found in the archive. Fill (7) of pit [8] is noteworthy for containing what might be an abraded sherd of late Roman ROB SH among an otherwise early Roman assemblage. Fill (15) of pit [16] is similarly noteworthy for containing a tiny chip of possibly Central Gaulish samian and an extremely abraded sherds of SED BB1 that must indicate a second-century or later date. The occurrence of two extremely attenuated pieces of traded/imported wares in this feature is unusual given the very local nature of the remainder of the assemblage from the site.

Conclusions

This is a small assemblage lacking significant numbers of diagnostic sherds or traded wares that hamper interpretation. The majority of the assemblage seems to date from the early Roman period and probably the late first to mid second centuries and is dominated by conservative fabrics and vessel forms. The presence of kilns close to the site at Brackley Hatch and elsewhere (Timby 2007, 117) is suggestive of a flourishing local potting tradition that developed in the Iron Age and continued into the Roman period. The lack of imports and the focus on jar forms is suggestive of a low status, rural settlement and the assemblage bears little comparison with the wider variety of forms and fabrics present at the two local urban centres of Bicester (Mould 1996) and Towcester (Brown and Woodfield 1983). This is a small assemblage with limited research potential, so no further work is recommended.

References

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Howe, M., Perrin, J. and Mackreth, D. 1980 *Roman Pottery from the Nene Valley: a guide*. Peterborough, Peterborough City Museum Occasional Paper 2.

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Context	Description	Number of Sherds	Weight(g)	EVE
5	Fill of pit [6]	1	2	0
7	Fill of pit [8]	16	143	0
10	Fill of linear [9]	1	7	0
12	Fill of ditch [11]	59	591	0.69
15	Fill of pit [16]	5	6	0
23	Fill of pit [24]	5	131	0.01
26	Fill of pit [25]	13	29	
28	Fill of ditch [27]	119	828	0.98
30	Fill of grave [32]	4	11	0.02
34	Upper fill of grave [36]	13	78	0
Total		236	1826	1.70

Timby, J. 2007 'The Iron Age and Roman pottery', in A. Mudd (ed.) *Iron Age and Roman Settlement in the Northamptonshire Uplands*. King's Lynn, Northamptonshire Archaeology Monograph 1.

Tomber R. and Dore, J. 1998 *The National Roman Fabric Reference Collection: a handbook*. London, Museum of London Archaeology Service

Table 1 Quantities of pottery from individual contexts

Fabric code	Sherd count	% Sherd Count	Weight (g)	% Weight	EVE	% EVE
FINE	1	0.4	3	0.2	0	0.0
GR1	30	12.7	233	12.8	0.66	38.8
GR2	17	7.2	85	4.7		0.0
GR5	6	2.5	89	4.9	0.06	3.5
GR7	20	8.5	311	17.0		0.0
GR8	20	8.5	187	10.2	0.2	11.8

GREY	9	3.8	40	2.2	`	0.0
GREY1	15	6.4	130	7.1	0.38	22.4
GREY2	8	3.4	52	2.8		0.0
GREY4	1	0.4	2	0.1		0.0
GREY5	2	0.8	4	0.2	0.08	4.7
GREY6	2	0.8	17	0.9	0.04	2.4
GREY8?	1	0.4	6	0.3		0.0
LNV CC	15	6.4	83	4.5		0.0
OO	5	2.1	1	0.1		0.0
OXID	11	4.7	24	1.3	0.1	5.9
OXID2	17	7.2	41	2.2		0.0
'PNK GT'	14	5.9	266	14.6		0.0
ROB SH?	1	0.4	6	0.3		0.0
SA1	1	0.4	7	0.4		0.0
SA4	4	1.7	59	3.2		0.0
SACA	1	0.4	22	1.2		0.0
SAM CG	1	0.4	1	0.1		0.0
SED BB1	1	0.4	1	0.1		0.0
SH1	9	3.8	26	1.4	0.1	5.9
SH5	2	0.8	16	0.9		0.0
SH6	14	5.9	37	2.0		0.0
SST2	2	0.8	54	3.0		0.0
WS	1	0.4	10	0.5		0.0
WW1	1	0.4	3	0.2	0.08	4.7
WW2	4	1.7	10	0.5		0.0
Total	236	100.0	1826	100.0	1.7	100.0

Table 2 The pottery assemblage quantified by sherd count, weight and EVE.