



Compendiario

An Assemblage of Notes and News



SAXON POTTERY FROM MARKET LAVINGTON, WILTSHIRE

The site at Market Lavington (SU 013542) consists of an early Saxon cemetery, containing some forty inhumations, and an adjacent settlement, situated next to the present church on a small greensand spur at the western end of the Vale of Pewsey. As well as Saxon artefacts, finds of prehistoric, Romano-British, medieval and post-medieval date were also recovered from the site. The complete ceramic assemblage comprises 3198 sherds (25,796 g). Of this total, 1215 sherds (9804 g) have been dated to the Early/Middle Saxon period. This report summarises the results of the analysis of the Saxon assemblage so far.

This is as yet the largest known domestic assemblage of Saxon pottery in Wiltshire; as such it should provide valuable chronological information regarding the ceramic sequence during the Saxon period in this area, as well as other aspects such as manufacture and vessel form and function.

Apart from two complete vessels found with inhumations in the cemetery, the majority of the assemblage derives from contexts within the adjacent settlement such as from pits, ditches and sunken-featured buildings associated with a 'dark earth' occupation deposit averaging about 0.30 m in depth.

The pottery falls into two main fabric groups: organically-tempered and sandy, in a ratio of approximately 8:1. Twelve fabric types have been defined. In many cases, however, division between the various fabric types is purely subjective, and the initial impression is that differences in the coarseness and frequency of inclusions merely reflect variations along a continuous spectrum rather than discrete fabric types. It seems likely that most, if not all of the assemblage derives from local manufacture on an *ad hoc* basis. Clay sources are available nearby, and tempering agents, particularly the organic materials, would have been readily accessible. It is hoped that on-going petrological analysis will help to elucidate this point. Vessel manufacture ranges from the very crude to the fairly well-finished; firing is irregular and is consistent with the use of bonfire or clamp kilns. No evidence of pottery making on site was recovered, but such manufacture would have left only very ephemeral traces.

The definition of vessel forms has been restricted by the lack of complete profiles; apart from the two vessels from the cemetery already mentioned, only one other complete vessel, a small cup with an inturned rim, was recovered. Seven rim/vessel forms were defined, on the basis of twenty-three rims. These vessel forms include rounded or slack-shouldered jars with constricted necks (*i.e.* closed forms), wide-mouthed jars or bowls with no pronounced shoulders, and straight- or convex-sided bowls. The two complete vessels from the cemetery can be described respectively as globular and sub-biconical jars with constricted necks; the other jars from the site could fall into either shape. Evidence of use is restricted to burnt residues on the interior of several body sherds, sooting on the exteriors of one bowl and one jar, and a single perforated rim from a vessel of unknown form.

The amount of effort expended on vessel finishing varies. A small proportion of the sherds are burnished, though none to a very high quality. The coarser organic-tempered sherds often show signs of wiping with vegetable material. Decoration is very scarce; only seven sherds had any form of decoration. Two stamps were identified, a segmented circle, and a segmented

oval, the latter identified by Lady Briscoe as a type so far restricted to East Anglia (Briscoe D 3ai). The two cemetery vessels are neither burnished nor decorated. The dating of this assemblage has proved problematic, due to its homogeneity, and the lack of direct association with other datable artefacts. Metalwork from the cemetery suggests a date in the 6th century; the date range of the settlement may extend further. Stratigraphy on the site is very limited, and no reliable sequence could be constructed for the Saxon pottery on this basis.

Organically-tempered pottery is considered to have a date range, in the south of England at least, from the 6th to the end of the 8th century (see Cunliffe 1976), but there is now a growing body of evidence for its survival well beyond this date, for example in Berkshire (Astill and Lobb forthcoming). In Wiltshire, other groups of organically-tempered pottery are not closely dated, and could apparently fall anywhere between the late 5th and the 9th centuries (Fowler 1966). The dating of vessel forms is equally unreliable, since many of the forms, being of a purely functional nature, are likely to be long-lived.

In the absence of definite evidence to the contrary, therefore, the bulk of the Anglo-Saxon assemblage is taken to date from the 6th century, and this is supported by comparison with the domestic assemblage from Old Down Farm near Andover, also dated to the 6th century, which provides parallels for many of the vessel forms from Market Lavington (Davies 1980). Ambiguous evidence for a continuation of the sequence in the settlement beyond this date comes from a single rim sherd in a calcareous-tempered fabric, found in a feature cutting one of the sunken-featured buildings. While the rim form is paralleled amongst the rest of the assemblage, the anomalous fabric might represent a chronologically later element. Otherwise, there appears to be a hiatus on the site until the appearance in the 10th century of Late Saxon ceramics in the form of Cheddar B ware and other calcareous-tempered wares.

Work is still in progress on the ceramic assemblage from Market Lavington, and the results will be included in the final site report, which is to be published in monograph form.

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FURTHER OBSERVATIONS ON EARLY GLAZES

In the last journal, Ken Barton drew attention to the growing application of the term splashed (or splash) glaze to define a glaze dusted in lead sulphide with characteristic 'nucleolated craters', giving the appearance of splash marks (Barton 1990, 58). This type of glaze is particularly prevalent in the 12th and