

For: Headland Archaeology
Site: Fosseway, Warks
Site code: 1N19ITCAR
Status: assessment/spot date
Author: Jane Timby BA, PhD, FSA, MCIfA
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POTTERY

1 Introduction and methodology

- 1.1 The pottery assemblage submitted to the author from the archaeological work at Fosseway, Warks amounted to some 1212 sherds weighing 14.2 kg and with 7.11 EVE's largely dating to the later prehistoric and early Roman period accompanied by at least two potential Bronze Age pieces. The assemblage was recovered from Areas 1 and 2.
- 1.2 The assemblage was recorded using selected recommendations outlined in Pottery Standards (Barclay *et al.* 2016). Sherds were sorted macroscopically aided with a x20 microscope into provisional fabric groups based on the principal inclusions present in the clay, along with the frequency and grade of the inclusions. The approach used follows that recommended by the PCRG guidelines (1997) where the principal inclusions are denoted by letters. Traded Roman wares are coded using the National Roman fabric series (Tomber and Dore 1998) and local wares more generically by firing colour and inclusion type.
- 1.3 The entire sorted assemblage was quantified by sherd count and weight for each recorded context. In addition rims were broadly coded to broad form type and measured for diameter and percentage present, for the estimation of vessel equivalents (EVE) (Orton *et al.* 1993). Very small crumbs, too small to identify as pot or fired clay, were subsumed under the code OO. Details of decoration and use through the presence of sooting or residues, was noted where present. The data was entered onto a MSExcel spreadsheet deposited with the site archive whilst the summarized data can be found in Table 1 along with a provisional spot date for each context.
- 1.4 The assemblage was recovered from 116 contexts with the quantities ranging from single sherds to 168 sherds from cxt (11019). Some 65% of the contexts only yielded five or fewer sherds which is not sufficient for close dating. The condition of the pottery is variable but the overall average weight, including both later prehistoric and Roman wares, is 11.7 g. Some 21 contexts relate to material extracted from Roman contexts so the dating is based on the provided material not the overall assemblage from those contexts.
- 1.5 No ancillary research has been carried out as part of this assessment to check for other similar assemblages from the area. The assessment was undertaken in the

absence of any site information. Many of the sherds from the environmental samples are generally unwashed which has masked details of fabric and surface finish.

2 Area 1: description of pottery

2.1 Area 1 yielded some 738 sherds of pottery weighing 8601 g and with 2.13 EVE's. The number of diagnostic rim sherds was thus very low. Pottery was recovered from 80 defined contexts with a further context producing only fired clay. Many of the sherds showed post-depositional surface accretions and poor surface preservation. Calcareous wares were generally badly leached.

2.2 The sherds were divided into five wares groups some of which are further subdivided: calcareous with a mixture of mainly limestone with, fossil shell and other fossiliferous debris (LISH/LI1); sandy (SA1-6); sandy with sparse calcareous inclusions (SALI); iron-rich (FE/SAFE) and sandy with organic inclusions (SAOR).

2.3 Overall sandy wares dominate accounting 75.5% (count) of the Area 1 assemblage. Five distinct fabrics were noted:

- SA1: a moderately well-sorted common frequency of rounded quartz sand, rare iron. Mainly 0.5 mm and less. Iron Age.
- SA2: a sparse scatter of rounded quartz sand with a background scatter of finer glauconitic sand. Iron Age.
- SA3: sparse, ill-sorted faceted quartz and quartz sandstone, rare iron. Grains up to 2mm and finer. Probably a Malvernian fabric. Single sherd. Iron Age.
- SA4: finer ware with burnished surfaces. Sparse, moderately well-sorted, rounded quartz and occasional angular grains and rare biotite mica. One sherd only. Iron Age.
- SA5: a harder, more granular fabric with a common frequency of well-sorted rounded quartz sand up to 0.5 mm. (Mainly Roman).

Vessels are handmade and often quite thick walled. Some show vertical wiping and a small number have a scratch-marked or scored finish. Forms are almost exclusively confined to jars including globular bodied jars with simple everted, or vertical rims and neckless jars with beaded or bevelled rims. There is one basesherd (11004) with a small projecting foot; the remainder are standard flat bases. Several of the vessels show evidence of use in the form of sooting or burnt residue.

2.4 Calcareous wares account for 35.8% of the assemblage by count. Sherds are generally poorly preserved where the inclusions have been leached out leaving voids or traces of decayed limestone. Forms are again limited to jars including one with a square top, globular bodied jars and one example with a vertical slightly expanded rim showing fingernail impressed decoration (13267). At least one vessel shows vertical wipe marks.

2.5 The sandy wares with sparse limestone inclusions (SALI) account for 8.8% of the Area 1 assemblage. Featured sherds are limited but include one jar with a carinated

shoulder, one ovoid jar with an undifferentiated rim and a simple everted rim jar. Some vessels show vertical smoothing marks.

- 2.6 The remaining two groups, sandy with organic inclusions (SAOR) and iron-stone-tempered vessels are both quite small. In the case of fabric SAOR most of the sherds probably come from one vessel in cxt (11047), a simple everted rim jar. The iron-rich fabric is represented by just 11 sherds one of which from cxt (11311-13) is particularly thick-walled and may be Bronze Age urn.
- 2.7 As an assemblage the pottery fabrics shows greater affinity with the south and east Midlands with little evidence of material to the west. The calcareous wares reflect a clay source within the Jurassic series whilst sandy wares appear to be common in assemblages from the Milton Keynes area and some Northamptonshire sites. There is just one sherd in the Area 1 assemblage which suggests a Malvernian source.
- 3 Area 1: fired clay
 - 3.1 In addition to the pottery 25 fragments (140 g) of fired clay was recovered from three contexts: (13193), (13212) and (13237). The one piece from (13193) had a wattle impression suggesting a structural function. The remaining pieces were irregular lumps with no definable purpose.
- 4 Area 2: description of pottery
 - 4.1 An assemblage of some 479 sherds weighing 5626 g and with 4.98 EVE's was assessed by the author from Area 2. The pottery was recovered from 35 contexts and whilst largely of later Iron Age-early Roman date contains one probably Later Bronze Age sherd and a small number of later Roman pieces.
 - 4.2 A single bodysherd with a quartzite temper from (22125) probably dates to the later Bronze Age. The use of quartzite at this time as a tempering agent is known from Oxfordshire sites but could also potentially be earlier.
 - 4.3 The later Iron Age-early Roman pottery has been divided into five main ware groups: grog-tempered (GR); shelly (SH/LISH); sandy with calcareous (SALI) sandy with grog/clay pellets (GRSA) and sandy (SA/SY). The codes are augmented by additional information in the archive reflecting firing colour or other additives. In addition there are examples of Malvernian rock-tempered ware (MAL RE A), Buckinghamshire pink-grog-tempered ware (PNK GT) and Dorset black-burnished ware (DOR BB1).
 - 4.4 Grog-tempered wares account for 6.5% of the assemblage examined here. Vessels are mainly handmade and include neckless everted rim jars and some bodysherds with fine horizontal combing. Sherds with a sandy matrix containing sparse grog/clay pellets account for 9.3% and include lid-seated jars, storage jar. The grog-tempered tradition dates back into the later Iron Age but continues well into the Roman period with fabric GRSA continuing into the early 2nd century.

- 4.4 The shelly ware tradition similarly dates back into the Iron Age and continues throughout much of the Roman period. It accounts for 39.7% (count) of the pottery from Area 2. The sherds here are often leached and not well preserved. Whilst some of the sherds here could date back into the later Iron Age most here are likely to be of early Roman date with examples of channel rim and lid-seated jars. One vessel with a large heavy, slightly moulded rim in a limestone and shell-tempered ware from (240265) is a form which first appears in Malvernian ware in the later Iron Age and lasting into the late 1st century AD. A few sherds of sandy ware with sparse calcareous inclusions are contemporary and similarly feature a handmade lid-seated jar. A jar rim from (22146) with a triangular form may be a sherd of late Roman shelly ware (ROB SH) which would indicate a date in the mid-later 4th century AD.
- 4.5 The group is similarly dominated by sandy wares, 34% (count) with both handmade and wheel-made vessels. Jar forms prevail with examples of lid-seated forms, necked, everted rim, beaded rim and flat rim types most of which are current in the 1st-2nd centuries. There is one example of a flat based colander from (240002) and a mid-late 1st century platter imitating an imported form (*Camulodunum* 12)(Hawkes and Hull 1947, 219) from (25000). A copy of a plain-sided BB1-type dish from (23229) is likely to date from the later 2nd century on.
- 4.6 Of note amongst the other wares are several sherds from a tubby jar in Malvernian ware from (240212) with a complete profile and also a type spanning the LIA-early Roman period. Other odd Roman sherds include a piece of pink-grog-tempered sherd from (250206) and four sherds of DOR BB1 from (250000).
- 5 Area 2: fired clay
 - 5.1 Some shell-tempered pieces from (22117) are likely to be from a circular oven plate with a thickness of 25 mm. In addition three fragments of fired clay of indeterminate form were recovered from (240220).
- 6 Chronology
 - 6.1 The earliest pottery includes a single bodysherd from (11311-13) associated with a Roman sherd which may be a fragment of Bronze Age urn. A second sherd with quartzite tempering from Area 2 (22125) is probably of Later Bronze Age date although could potentially be earlier.
 - 6.2 Most of the pottery from Area 1 appears to demonstrate a single phase of occupation dating to the middle Iron Age (c 400-250/200 BC). Although the groups are small there are hints of this continuing into the later middle Iron Age (c 250/200-100BC) but this is quite difficult to quantify although may become clearer with some site information and plan. A complete absence of grog-tempered ware, more prevalent in Area 2, would suggest there is no overlap between the two areas although one may have succeeded the other after a short hiatus. There are no decorated vessels other than the one rim with fingernail decoration although a

number of vessels show scratch-marking/scoring on the exterior surfaces; a trait which first appears in the middle Iron Age continuing into the later middle Iron Age.

- 6.3 The pottery examined from Area 2 appears more mixed in date but with an emphasis on the early Roman period which may extend back into the later Iron Age. This is by no means certain as many of the wares show little change until the 2nd century but the impression is that occupation may have started in the pre-Roman period. The emphasis on sandy wares reinforces the likelihood of an early Roman date.

7 Potential and further work

- 7.1 The Area 1 assemblage is typical of many middle Iron Age sites in the Warwickshire-Northamptonshire area where there seems to be an expansion of settlement in the third or fourth century BC e.g. Coton Park, Rugby (Chapman 2020) and various sites along the A43 Towcester to M40 road improvement scheme, such as Silverstone Fields Farm and Biddlesden Bridge (Mudd 2007). Some of these sites appear to be have been abandoned in the later 1st century BC/AD whilst others continued, or, after a small hiatus, were re-established in the early Roman period.

- 7.2 Thus the present assemblage could be regarded as quite typical of the rural settlement pattern at this time. If further work is to be undertaken the assemblage should be first placed into the context of the site and then compared with others in the region to help build up a pattern of landscape development as well as social and economic status.

- 7.3 Approximately 14 vessels from Area 1 would warrant illustration and 4 from Area 2.

- 7.4 The assemblage should be retained.

References

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