

Pottery from excavations at Mellor, Stockport: A review

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Summary

The purpose of this review is to draw together the reports on the pottery and related material from the first five years work on the site of Mellor near Stockport (1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002) and to present an overview of the assemblage as a whole, rather than as sub-divided by year of excavation. The review has been compiled and edited by C.G. Cumberpatch, drawing on, and reproducing, contributions to earlier reports by the authors named in the by-line and in connection with individual specialist contributions. It is intended that this will serve as a basic upon which decisions can be made regarding the potential of the ceramics to contribute to the overall research aims of the Mellor project and to outline areas where additional funds are required in order to fill gaps in the coverage of the pottery from the site. Suggestions for areas in which further work is needed are presented in the final section of the report.

Prehistoric pottery from Mellor, Stockport

C.G. Cumberpatch BA PhD

Introduction

This review is intended to draw together the information presented in two previous reports the later prehistoric pottery from Mellor (Cumberpatch 2000, 2002) and to present it alongside other reports on ceramics and related materials. In the writing of this overview the opportunity has been taken to compare the two groups of later prehistoric material and, where necessary, to amend the descriptions and definitions of the fabrics and vessels. Specifically the opportunity has been taken to incorporate the material from the 2001 excavations into the scheme outlined in the report on the material from the earlier seasons of excavation. This has entailed the extension of the fabric scheme to incorporate the new material. The present report should therefore be seen as superseding those produced previously and, as far as possible, the fabric scheme presented here should be used as the basis for future reports, with additions as necessary.

The basic information pertaining to the pottery assemblage is summarised in Table 1. Re-examination of the material has allowed a small amount of material to be discarded as being non-ceramic in nature. The items concerned are listed in Table 7.

Type series

Fabric 1

A fine, soft, sandy textured fabric containing fine rounded quartz grit (0.2 – 0.4mm), occasional larger grains (up to 0.8mm) with rare very large (1.00mm – 3.00mm) hard, dark, angular, possibly igneous, inclusions. The vessels were fired to an orange-brown colour throughout. The illustrated examples (Figures 1 and 2) have a slightly rough finish with no sign of any burnishing or smoothing, although a hard object, perhaps a piece of smooth wood or bone appears to have been used to smooth the top of the rim.

Fabric 1A resembles Fabric 1 but is somewhat sandier in texture and lacks the non-crystalline rock fragments. In addition there is some evidence of the presence of grass stalks, but this could be accidental and does not seem to be a regular feature of the fabric.

Fabric 1B (formerly Fabric 5 type) is a soft sandy textured fabric with sparse fine quartz and occasional angular rock fragments distinguished from other Fabric 1 types by being reduced to dark grey throughout and with some sooting or a black deposit on the internal surface.

Fabric 1 type has a distinctive soapy texture and a denser, more homogenous appearance, but the same range of inclusions (quartz and black rock fragments).

Fabric 2

A hard, dense, robust fabric containing abundant rounded and occasionally sub-rounded quartz grains (0.2 – 0.4mm) in a black, reduced matrix. The illustrated example (Figure 4; *to be drawn*) has a roughly smoothed finish with a simple rounded rim.

Fabric 3

A moderately hard, dense, black reduced fabric with fine rounded quartz inclusions. This is probably a variant of fabric 2, although more examples are needed before this can be confirmed. The illustrated example (Figure 3) is finely finished with a possible burnished surface.

Fabric 3A is a particularly distinctive fine black fabric apparently lacking the fine quartz grains typical of Fabric 3. It appears to be extremely friable and crumbly, the majority of sherds being broken into many small irregular lumps. Only two or three pieces have recognisable surfaces.

Fabric 4

A very distinctive, coarse fabric containing abundant large angular inclusions up to 6mm long in a soft, bright orange oxidised matrix. The rock types represented include sandstone and chert. Surviving surfaces are rare on sherds in this fabric which somewhat resembles briquetage.

Fabric 5

Fabric 5 was first defined in the report on the material from the 1999 / 2000 season as a moderately hard, muddy textured fabric containing moderate quantities of angular, non-crystalline rock fragments with traces of grass stems in the fired body. The surface was smoothed with some surface cracking. The fabric appeared to have a tendency to split and flake, although the fracture was not laminated in the conventional sense. This is the same fabric as was used for the semi-complete vessel found during the 2001 season (Figure 5) and reconstructed. The results of the petrographic analysis of the fabric by Dr. R. Ixer are presented below.

Fabric 6

A hard, brick red to orange fabric containing occasional angular to sub-angular lumps of rock. Some examples are little more than lumps of fired clay and resemble small fragments of brick or tile as much as they do pottery. They appear to be harder than the briquetage from the site.

Vessel forms

The rarity of large sherds makes it difficult to be certain about the shape of the majority of the pots. With the exception of the substantially complete vessel from Trench 15 Context 015 (Figure 5) and the three joining sherds from Contexts 1028 / 3008 (Figure 1), other diagnostic sherds are limited to small fragments of rim indicative of little more than jar-like forms, the majority with simple rounded rims. Four rim forms have been defined and these are described below.

Rim type 1

A low, flat topped, beaded rim on a globular body with a small everted lip which distinguishes the form from the commoner straight rounded rims. See Figure 1 and Plate 1 (Contexts 1028/3008).

Rim type 2

A simple, unelaborated rounded rim with a slightly flattened top. Parallels can be found for this rim shape (e.g. Elsdon 1996:A.6;8), but the extent to which they are significant is unclear, given the simple and plain nature of the rim. See Figure 2 and Plate 2 (OVM99, Trench 1, 1013).

Rim type 3

A round, beaded rim with a pronounced external bulge. Possible parallels include Pickburn Leys in South Yorkshire (Sydes 1993:Figure 41) although the fabric of the two vessels is markedly different. See Figure 3 and Plate 3 (OVM00 Trench III(6), 3054, SFN 89).

Rim type 4

A simple rounded rim, probably generally similar to that of the semi-complete vessel from Context 21. The sherd illustrated in Figure 4 (*To be drawn*) and Plate 4 (OVM99, Trench 3, 3011).

Discussion

It is difficult to set the material from Mellor into any regional or local context as later Iron Age pottery is extremely rare within a region which extends from South and West Yorkshire, across the Pennines and into Cheshire and the Mersey Basin (Bevan 2000, Matthews 1997, 1999, Sumpter 1990) which precludes the kinds of typological comparison which is standard for other regions. Although a number of sites have recently been excavated in South Yorkshire which have produced pottery of later Iron Age date (Cumberpatch in prep., Cumberpatch, Leary and Willis 2003), the fabrics differ significantly from those found at Mellor. It would be premature to draw any far reaching conclusions from the material available for examination at the present time, but it seems that while pottery is rare and its use was restricted, it was being manufactured in small amounts in the region in the later Iron Age and also imported, in equally small amounts, from areas further south and east (Lincolnshire and the east midlands). A complete review of the regional situation is required before the full implications of the emerging picture will become clear. The petrographic analysis of the vessel from Trench 15, context 21 (see Ixer, below) suggested a relatively local source for this particular vessel (and others

sharing the same fabric) and a future direction for research might include the extension of the programme of analysis to include examples of the other fabric groups which, on the basis of visual examination, appear to be somewhat different.

In terms of technology, the Mellor pottery is entirely hand made, probably using a slab-building rather than coiling technique. None of the vessels recovered to date was decorated and finishing was limited to smoothing and pinching, the latter notably on the rim of the substantially complete pot from Trench 15 (OVM01, context 21). Other vessels have simple flat topped everted rims (Figures 1 and 2) finished by hand, probably with the aid of a piece of polished wood or bone to produce the characteristic flat-topped rims.

The functions of the vessels are unknown. Given the small size of the assemblage and the scarcity of pottery in the region generally, it seems unlikely that everyday cooking and eating depended upon the use of pottery, suggesting either that cooking techniques were based upon roasting and baking or that organic containers were used, perhaps in conjunction with hot stones. This having been said, signs of burning (in the form of blackening and apparently burnt deposits) were visible on some of the sherds, notably on the rim of the vessel from 1028 and associated contexts, as shown in Plate 1. A possible avenue for future research might be the investigation of organic residues surviving within the body of the vessels which could cast light on the uses to which the vessels were put. Analysis of organic remains and animal bone may also be informative in determining the methods of food preparation used on the site.

Conservation report on the vessel from OVM01, Trench 15, Context 021

A.C. Walster BSc. (Aardvark Conservation)

Brief description

Mid-Late Iron Age cooking vessel sherds, excavated 2001, Mellor, Greater Manchester

Visual examination / condition

The vessel consisted of approximately 125+ sherds, which appeared to be in fairly stable condition although several had laminating surfaces. The fabric is light-dark brown/black in colour to its outer surface and patchy dark red/brown over most of its interior. The break edges revealed a dark core and fairly dense tempering which was initially thought to include iron-rich inclusions, possibly iron ore or slag (C. Cumberpatch, pers. com.). Fingermarks were visible around the rim of the vessel, giving a 'dimpled' appearance where it had been squeezed or pinched and may be partly decorative? The vessel appears to have been hand-built and was fairly uneven in thickness, although no method of manufacture was visible. The outer surface appeared to have been burnished and smoothed.

X-Radiographic examination

The vessel sherds were x-rayed (at 100kvp for 1-1.5 mins) to see if this would aid the process of reconstruction. Unfortunately, this was not the case but the x-rays did however aid the examination of the size and extent of the inclusions. The x-rays revealed that the vessel was tempered with an array of inclusions varying widely in density and size. Some of the inclusions appeared to be very similar to a grog-tempered experimental briquette x-radiographed at the same time and may, therefore be grog. The white inclusions on the x-ray indicate that the vessel was tempered with a very dense, almost metallic material, which was initially thought to be slag tempering. Although the metallic nature of this material was confirmed by running a magnet over the surface of the smaller sherds, subsequent petrographic analysis (see Ixer, below) showed that the material was not slag. Overall, the temper appears to be poorly mixed and fairly random.

Conservation

The sherds were carefully cleaned with a soft brush to remove any loose soil, prior to being stuck with HMG Paraloid B72 adhesive (methyl methacrylate copolymer in a solvent base). Plates 1 to 4 show the vessel undergoing conservation (see accompanying disc). It was decided not to consolidate, since most of the fragments appeared to be strong. Where the surface was spalling away

on some sherds, it was repaired using the above adhesive. Although much of the vessel is missing, particularly around the rim and central body area, it was possible to reconstruct a basic profile.

The reconstructed portions are still extremely fragile and should be handled with great care.

Acknowledgements

Grateful thanks are due to Mark West, Technical Manager, Non Destructive Testers Ltd, Sheffield, for the X-radiography of the sherds.

Petrographic analysis of the Iron Age pot from Mellor (OVM 01 Tr15. 021.)

Dr. R. Ixer

Preparation/Methods

Two sherds were supplied. Both sherds were examined using a x10 hand lens and their colour compared with the GSA rock-colour chart. A number of sherd crumbs and individual clasts were crushed in an agate mortar and tested with a hand magnet. Dark sub-metallic-looking clasts were strongly magnetic and some crushed pot also contained a high proportion of magnetic matter.

Multiple slices were cut from one sherd and impregnated with a cold, setting resin (araldite). One thin section, one polished thin section and one polished block comprising two slices of the sherd were prepared in the usual manner. Both the polished thin section and block proved difficult to polish and this imposed constraints on the petrographical examination of the opaque phases.

The sections were examined in transmitted and reflected light, using x8, x16 oil and x40 oil immersion lenses.

Results

Macroscopical results

The sherds are very dark with a pronounced subparallel, planar fabric that approximates to a lamination. The sherds have a striking, subvitreous lustre; almost looking vitrified. The plastic matrix is fine-grained, clean with a minor, visible, non-plastic component.

The cut surface shows an almost uniformly dark matrix varying in colour from olive black (5Y 2/1 on the GSA rock-colour chart) to dark grey (N3). It carries sparse, square, pale yellowish brown (10YR 6/2) basalt clasts and 1 – 3mm diameter, cubic, magnetic opaques (?magnetite). The non-opaques have a restricted size range.

The thin section shows a 6mm thick, brownish-black (5YR 2/1) ?inner core passing out into a 3mm wide, moderate brown (5YR 3/4) outer rim. The clay is clean with a strong, linear fabric and encloses up to 3mm diameter, fine-grained, equant rock clasts and 1mm diameter, opaque grains.

Microscopical results.

The pot is essentially monolithic with altered basalt as the main temper. The clay matrix is clean with very little fine-grained detrital quartz or white mica; it carries abundant, fine-grained opaques that, due to the poor polish, could not be identified and TiO₂ minerals, 2 –10µm in size. Some of the TiO₂ grains are pseudomorphs after skeletal magnetite/ilmenite.

Larger, single grains include euhedral quartz crystals with fine-grained carbonate dust in their cores, zoned plagioclase, clinopyroxene and ilmenite; the last three are constituents of the altered basalt. Discrete biotite clasts are very rare.

There are few rock fragments. The most common is altered basalt comprising tabular, zoned plagioclase intergrown with clinopyroxene, ilmenite laths up to 200µm in length, lesser amounts of magnetite, also up to 200µm in diameter, minor biotite and brown, fibrous, altered mafic minerals. Some of the basalt is vesicular with brown pleochroic phyllosilicate (after chlorite?) infilling void spaces. Other rock fragments are rare but include polycrystalline/vein quartz, stretched quartz, brown chert, silicified limestone and very, very fine-grained, felted volcanics.

Rounded to irregular patches of very fine-grained haematite/limonite are common and up to 1mm in diameter. Some comprise limonite pseudomorphs replacing sulphides, especially pyrite,

others enclose very fine clay laths and other silicates and are interpreted as being iron-cemented soil (iron pan); others are banded/botryoidal in texture. One 1mm diameter clast comprises a uniform, fine-grained haematite enclosing irregular void spaces (not rounded gas bubbles) and small silicate grains – this is not a vesicular lava and may be anthropogenic in origin.

Thin coatings of botryoidal limonite or wad (manganese oxides/hydroxides) infill the planar voids in the pot and much opaque matter has penetrated into the pot from these void spaces.

The presence of euhedral quartz plus carbonate dust is striking and unusual. Elsewhere (Whitemore Haye for example) similar textures have been interpreted as authigenic gypsum with anhydrite.

Interpretation.

Manufacture

Despite the rough appearance of the sherds, the pot has a high preparation index as defined by Ixer and Lunt, (1991). The clay is uniform, essentially devoid of fine-grained, detrital quartz or white mica but has fine TiO₂ pseudomorphs after volcanic magnetite and trace amounts of very fine-grained volcanic rock clasts. This unusual combination suggests that the clay formed from a weathered, basic volcanic rock rather than being alluvial or glacial. The non-plastic component is angular, monolithic (basalt) and has a very restricted size range suggesting that crushed rock was used. Hence the fabric of the pot is consistent with tempering of a naturally clean clay or cleaned clay with crushed basalt. No other tempering material is present in meaningful amounts so that the presence of the other non-plastic components, notably the limonite/haematite/magnetite may not have any special significance.

Provenance of the raw materials

The non-plastic components may help in provenancing the raw material of the pot if two assumptions are made – that the basalt was taken from outcrop/subcrop rather than being an erratic and that the euhedral quartz has been correctly identified and is not authigenic gypsum. The basalt, minor amounts of very fine-grained igneous rock clasts and probably the clay are all volcanic in origin. It is possible that all come from the same locality namely from a site with weathered clay overlying cropping out basaltic lava.

The quartz crystals with carbonate dust in their cores are typical of silicified limestone and a small clast of silicified limestone occurs in one of the thin sections. No limestone or fossil clasts were recognised.

Both basaltic lava and silicified limestones are widely found (together) in the Carboniferous Limestone of Derbyshire. The nearest localities to Mellor where both lavas and silicified limestone are juxtaposed are 15 – 20kms away in the Castleton-Bradwell-Peak Forest-Hucklow Edge area.

Petrographical comparisons

Comparisons between the Mellor sherd and Fabric C from Dalton Parlours (a crushed sandstone tempered pot with Whin Sill quartz dolerite and fayalite-magnetite slag) (Buckland *et al* 1990:132 in Wrathmell and Nicholson 1990) can be made. Both have a fine-grained, basic igneous rock temper but the Mellor pot lacks both the sandstone and iron-making slag components of fabric C and that, in turn, lacks the millimetre diameter magnetite clasts that are present in the Mellor material. Igneous tempered Iron Age pottery is widespread in the British Midlands.

The Mellor pot has discrete magnetite grains and rounded limonite/haematite ?clasts and much limonite/wad staining along its fabric. Discrete magnetite and oxidised magnetite, up to 5mm in diameter, have been recognised from Iron Age pottery at Whitemoor Haye Quarry, Staffordshire as have rounded limonite-rich areas. At least some of these rounded areas and the limonite concentrations lying along the fabric of the pot (together with the presence of authigenic gypsum) have been ascribed to post-burial groundwater effects (Ixer 2002: 94-96 in Coates 2002). This explanation may also be true for the Mellor material also.

Prehistoric and Roman industrial ceramics and salt containers from Mellor, Stockport

C.G. Cumberpatch BA PhD

Introduction

This section of the report covers the crucible fragments, fired clay and briquetage from Mellor which hitherto were covered in reports on the prehistoric and Roman material. The intention is to draw attention to this material as an indicator of particular aspects of the activities on the site. The material is summarised in Tables 2 and 3. Table 4 lists fragments of fired clay of undetermined origin and function.

Crucible

To date seven sherds from crucibles have been recovered from excavations at Mellor. A number of these have been examined by Dr. D. Dungworth (CFA) and a preliminary report has been published in the interim site report for 2000 – 2001 (Dungworth 2001). Examination of the Roman pottery by Ruth Leary (TPAU) has revealed a further two fragments, one of which is a rim and both of which appear to be of Iron Age date. These require metallographic analysis in order to determine the composition of their contents.

Cheshire Salt Containers

Dr. Elaine L. Morris (University of Southampton)

A total of twenty-one sherds (63 grams) of briquetage, salt-drying and transporting containers from Cheshire, was identified in the ceramic assemblage. This particular type of briquetage, originally named Stony VCP or a stone-gritted Very Coarse Pottery (Gelling and Stanford 1965), is quite distinctive due to the oxidised firing condition resulting in an orange-coloured clay matrix and the presence of large angular fragments of igneous and sedimentary rock in the fabric (Morris 1985).

Nature of the assemblage

Sherds of Cheshire salt containers were recovered from ten contexts in four different trenches at Mellor (Table 3). The fragmentary nature of the material is demonstrated by the very small mean sherd weight of the assemblage as a whole at 3 grammes, which also shows the quality of the excavation recovery techniques on site - these are very, very tiny fragments in many cases. Only body sherds and flakes of briquetage containers were recovered.

Source and distribution

An intensive, detailed programme of petrological analysis of the fabric conducted between 1977-83 revealed the presence of a range of rocks including devitrified, porphyritic rhyolites and rhyolitic tuffs, microgranite/granophyres and micaceous siltstones/fine sandstones, in addition to quartz sand as a natural component of the clay matrix (Morris 1983; 1985, 357-64). The rock inclusions range in size up to 15 mm across with the igneous rocks being angular in shape and the sedimentary rocks rounded. This range of glacial drift inclusions, the original distribution of the briquetage on Iron Age hillforts and settlements and in early Roman occupation in an area stretching from Anglesey and Powys to Shropshire and Staffordshire and from Cheshire to Hereford-Worcester, the open, flared or vase-shaped profile of the containers (Britnell 1989, fig. 26; Morris 1985, fig. 8) and the presence of white deposits or bleaching on the sherds resulted in the recognition that this material was likely to have been salt containers used to dry brine from one of the many springs in the Cheshire Plain (Morris 1985, 352-70).

More recent discoveries of this very distinctive ceramic material demonstrate that the salt was transported even further north into the Wirral Peninsula (Philpott and Adams 1999) and the Mersey Basin (Nevell 1989; 1999), and eastward in Derbyshire (Knight 1999; Morris 1999), Nottinghamshire (Knight 1992) and Leicestershire (Elsdon 1991; 1992; 1994). The presence of this Cheshire

briquetage at Mellor, east of Stockport, has increased the northern distribution to *c.* 35 km from central Cheshire. Middlewich is most likely to be the source for this Iron Age salt production because of the presence of Roman saltworking at this location (Bestwick 1975) but prehistoric salt production evidence has yet to be found at any of the famous salt towns in Cheshire.

Dating

The earliest, well-dated deposits bearing Cheshire briquetage have been identified at Beeston Castle, Cheshire (Royle and Woodward 1993). Radiocarbon dating of stratified deposits indicates that this material was not in use at the site during the Late Bronze Age but was present during the aceramic Early Iron Age. The latest use of these containers for salt transportation appears to be in the early Roman period, as discovered at Collfryn, Powys (Britnell 1989).

Functions

The distribution of salt in distinctive containers demonstrates the extensive networks of exchange present during the second half of the first millennium B. C. in Britain (Morris 1994: 384-7, fig. 4A). Salt would have been required for a variety of preservation uses, such as in salting meat, making cheese and preserving hides. There is always the possibility that its' value may have been similar to a type of early currency, in the absence of coinage, and it could have been employed as a form of bridewealth amongst Iron Age tribal groups. Recent considerations suggest that the making of salt from brine may have resulted in a magical aura - both the production of this strange white crystalline substance emerging from bitter water when heated; saltmakers may have been seen as early alchemists.

Fired clay

C.G. Cumberpatch BA PhD

A small number of unidentified fragments of ceramic material have been classified as fired or burnt clay. These are listed in Table 4. Their origin and nature remains uncertain, but they could represent fragments of hearths or ovens.

Roman pottery from excavations at Mellor, Stockport

R.S. Leary

This interim report on the Roman pottery from Mellor is based upon two earlier reports (Leary 2000, 2003) which establish the broad outlines of the nature of the Roman assemblages from Mellor and should be read in conjunction with Tables 5 and 6. The text that follows accompanied the report on the material from the early seasons on the site and should be read in conjunction with Table 5. Table 6 summarises the details of the assemblage recovered in 2001 (including a small number of Iron Age sherds). A full report on this material will form part of the post-excavation programme which will follow the 2003 season of fieldwork.

Report on pottery from excavations at Mellor to 2001 (Table 5)

A small abraded collection of pottery was recovered from the site comprising three undiagnostic grey ware sherds, one sherd of Derbyshire ware, fifteen quartz-tempered, orange ware, including the rim and base of a small everted-rim beaker and a bifid-rim vessel of uncertain form, ten scraps of fired clay, probably not pottery, two fragments of orange tile, possibly tegula or a later tile, and one sherd of a samian from the footring base of a bowl or dish. The orange ware compares with fabrics produced at Derbyshire sites such as Derby Racecourse (Brassington 1971, 1980) and found at Chesterfield (Ellis 1980;103 fabric 6) during the late first to mid-second century. The beaker form is known in the Derby Racecourse kilns and was current at Derby throughout the second century and still present in third century deposits, although possibly redeposited there (Dool *et al.* 1985; fig. 39 no. 17, fig. 40 no. 46, table 9). The samian also gives a second century date. Derbyshire ware was produced from around 140AD until the mid-fourth century and is present outside of the Belper area, and indeed, of Derbyshire, by the Antonine period. The grey ware, if Roman, compares best with the kind of coarse ware produced in the later second and third century at the kilns of Lumb Brook (Brassington and Webster 1988). They may, however, be of a later date. The bifid rim compares with two very different vessels: a surprisingly early form of flagon, dating to the first century, and a bifid-rim, narrow-necked jar, perhaps of Severn Valley ware type and dated to the third century. The former type is pre-Flavian, so does not occur at the Derby Racecourse kilns, and is less likely in this context. The latter ware is present in the fort at Manchester and although this precise form is not illustrated, narrow-necked jars of similar date are identified (Jones 1974; 94, fig. 38 no. 163).

The typological affinities of the diagnostic sherds could all, therefore, be fitted into a date range in the second and third centuries with the possibility of a date as early as the Flavian-Trajanic period for the small beaker. The fabrics compare well with the wares being produced in Derbyshire kilns in the late first to second centuries, notably at Derby and Chesterfield, and in the second to fourth centuries at the Derbyshire ware kilns around Belper. The bifid-rim jar may be from the Severn Valley type industries but the condition of the sherd made firm identification impossible. Such a range of wares, including samian, from the site suggests some level of sophistication and integration with redistribution networks. Further work on the site may reveal the significance of these few sherds.

A larger assemblage of Roman pottery was recovered from the 2002 season and this is described in Table 6 (together with a small quantity of later prehistoric material). A full report on this material will form part of the report on the material expected to be recovered from the 2003 season.

Medieval, post-medieval and recent pottery from excavations at Mellor, Stockport

C.G. Cumberpatch BA PhD

At present the majority of the medieval and post-medieval pottery is awaiting examination. Three sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from the excavations and will be incorporated into the report along with the remainder of the post-Roman material. A brief scan of the material from the 2002 season suggested that there is a substantial group of 16th to 19th century material, incorporating a significant 18th century component which presumably relates to the building and occupation of the vicarage. Further work on this material will be directed towards establishing the date range of the material and linking it to the history and use of the standing buildings on the site.

Deleted and discarded material from Mellor

C.G. Cumberpatch BA PhD

In the course of the re-examination of the material the opportunity was taken to take a closer look at some of the more questionable items recovered from the site. As a result a number were found to be no more than dried mud, sometimes adhering to small stones. These items have been listed in Table 7 and no longer form part of the site archive.

Proposals for further work

C.G. Cumberpatch BA PhD

Although this report is not intended to present a comprehensive programme for further work on the pottery from Mellor, it is perhaps useful to indicate ways in which the work reported on here could be extended in the future. Clearly much will depend upon the availability of appropriate funding and the judgements to be made between competing demands upon limited resources and the following suggestions are based upon the potential represented by the material rather than upon necessity. It is, of course, highly desirable that the established programme of basic reporting on a year-by-year basis with synthesis continues in order to provide feedback between the different members of the project team.

Enhancement and expansion of existing reports: The Roman pottery from the site requires full analysis and the production of reports to MAP II Archive standard in order to fully understand the range of material present, its origin and the implications which this has for the site in its regional context.

The Iron Age pottery should be considered in relation to the distribution of other classes of finds with a view to determining the extent to which its presence and position on the site is the result of deliberate or structured deposition. Such an approach has proved highly informative in understanding the Iron Age of southern England (Hill 1995) and, while all the evidence points towards very different sets of cultural practices in northern England, the possibility that the representation of pottery (and other classes of finds) across the site is the result, at least in part, of decisions made as to the appropriate location and manner of the disposal of material in the light of strong cultural factors, should not be overlooked. This will require the preparation of plans showing the distribution (in three dimensions) of different classes of material across the site as a whole and in particular features. Evidence from South Yorkshire points to the importance of ditches as landscape features (Chadwick and Cumberpatch 1995) and there are suggestions, yet to be demonstrated statistically, that the distribution of pottery (early Roman as well as later prehistoric) is non-random in nature. In this regard the discovery of a semi-complete vessel in the ditch surrounding the site at Mellor may be of considerable significance.

Petrographic analysis: The potential of the petrographic analysis has been demonstrated by Dr Ixer's analysis of the pot from the 2001 season and it would be highly desirable to extend this technique to the other fabric groups identified macroscopically in order to determine the relationship between the fabrics in terms of their possible sources. Such information is entirely lacking at present but is crucial if interpretations of the character of the pottery industry are to advance beyond the merely conjectural.

Residue analysis: The scarcity of later prehistoric pottery in the region raises questions regarding the uses to which the small number of vessels were put. As noted in the report, it is perhaps unlikely that they were routinely used in cooking and other uses must be considered. The analysis of residues trapped within the clay matrix is becoming ever more accurate and, while care is needed in interpreting the results, it can be a useful and informative technique. The Universities of Bradford and Bristol both have an established track record in this type of work and might be approached with a view to establishing the potential of the material for this type of work. This should be done prior to the recommencement of excavation as it may be necessary to take samples of the soil surrounding the sherds selected for analysis.

Medieval and later pottery: As already discussed informally, there is a good opportunity for involving the Trust members in the recording and reporting on the medieval and early modern pottery from the site and perhaps linking this with an account of the post-Roman history of activity on the site.

Illustration: A programme of illustration is needed, following the production of the full reports on the Roman, medieval and later pottery. A single later prehistoric sherd also requires illustration.

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