



making sense of heritage

Site 7
A453 Widening Scheme
M1 Junction 24 to A52 Nottingham
Nottinghamshire

Iron Age Pottery
By Ian M. Rowlandson



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Iron Age Pottery Publication Report

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The ceramics totalled 202 sherds, weighing 3.542kg, rim equivalent (RE) 0.25, from a maximum of thirty four vessels and a single fired-clay object. The pottery was recorded in accord with the guidelines of the Prehistoric Ceramic Research Group using local coding schemes developed for the east Midlands (PCRG 1997; Knight 1998).

The range of pottery present would fit with a Middle to Late Iron Age date. The illustrated vessel (Figure 4) has unusually thick walls that are difficult to parallel but has a broadly similar form to examples attributed a middle Iron Age date from Breedon on the Hill, Leics (Kenyon 1950, fig. 3. 3) and vessels from Colsterworth, Leics and Ramsgate Park, Notts considered to be of late Iron Age date (Elsdon 1996a, D.16 and B.6a.26). In the absence of distinctive Late La Tène III type wares, it appears likely that this assemblage primarily represents activity in the second half of the first millennium BC however this should be viewed with some caution as wheel made late Iron Age Late Iron Age vessels were not common in this part of the Trent Valley. The limited number of vessels present and the lack of any external dating prevent a more precise date being attributed to this small assemblage.

Fabric types

All of the pottery had variable surface colours varying from black through to oxidised orange brown hues. Full fabric descriptions are contained within the online data appendix. The sherds present all appear to have been fired on a bonfire or in a clamp with variable oxygen levels during the process. The fabrics all have a clay matrix with twenty three vessels containing quartz sand. Varying proportions of coarser grits were present; predominantly angular fragments of sandstone (thirteen vessels) or quartzite (nine vessels). These fragments may have derived from local sandstones or from within glacial or riverine deposits. The angular nature of these inclusions suggests that the potters selected and shattered pebbles for producing these coarse grits. Five sherds from a single pinched-out base from pit 7114 contained sandstone and grog/clay pellets, either prepared by the potter or originating from local mudstone deposits (Firman and Leary 2001). A local source for these wares would also be possible. A single sherd with a pinched-out base, retrieved from the roundhouse ring gully, contained fragments of igneous rock along with sandstone. If one contrasts this assemblage with the Late Iron Age pottery from Site 28 near Clifton (see below), there were a greater range of fabrics including a greater proportion of grog and calcareous inclusions indicating a e broader range of tempering materials were in use in the immediate pre-conquest period.

Form, decoration and manufacture

Rim type	Form description	Minimum No Vessels	Sherd	Weight (g)
-	No rim	29	125	2396
EVR	Everted Rounded	2	61	1084
RD	Rounded Direct	1	7	25
RDA	Rounded Direct, internal angle at base of rim	1	2	5
REI	Rounded lip, rim expanded internally	1	7	32

Rim forms

Body shape	Form description	Minimum No Vessels	Sherds	Weight (g)
-	No body fragments	3	9	71
GLOB	Globular	1	49	1006
OV	Ovoid	1	7	32
U	Unknown	29	137	2433

Body types

Base type	Form description	Minimum No Vessels	Sherd	Weight (g)
-	No base present	28	156	2744
FLP	Flat Base, pinched out	3	10	81
FLT	Flat	1	2	8
SPED	Solid Pedestal	1	31	671
U	Unknown base type	1	3	38

Base types

All of the sherds appeared to have been from large vessels. There was limited evidence for body shape as the vessels were very fragmentary and most appear to have had broadly ovoid, globular or ellipsoidal forms as is common for vessels of the Middle Iron Age in this region (Knight 2002, 131). A full profile of a vessel from the enclosure ditch survived and a globular form could be securely attributed (Figure 4). As the other vessels present were so fragmentary it was not possible to further illustrate the group. No evidence of the carinated vessels that occur amongst groups from the first half of the first millennium BC were retrieved or the necked jars and bowls seen on Late Iron Age sites in the region.

Very few rim sherds were retrieved. Two vessels with rounded everted rims were recovered from the enclosure ditch and a single jar with an in-turned rounded rim was retrieved from the roundhouse ring gully with fine scored decoration similar to an example from Holme Pierrepont (Elsdon 1996, B2.48). All three of these vessels had scored decoration.

Scoring, mostly deep scratching, was the commonest decoration evident (vessels in contexts 7010, 7023, 7028, 7034, 7038, 7046 x2, 7063 and 7115). Knight (2002, 134) places the Scored ware surface treatment as a development of the 4th or perhaps 5th century BC that continued to be used into the 1st century AD in the Trent Basin. In the absence of any external dating this provides the broad dating for the activity on this site. The restricted range of forms present and the absence of the diagnostic Late La Tène III forms (Knight 2002, fig. 12.3) that have been seen on the nearby Site 28 at Clifton (reported below) might imply activity on this site did not continue into the period when such forms were in use. Other decorative techniques were rare: a limited amount of finger smoothing was evident beneath the rim of the illustrated vessel and one vessel from the roundhouse ring gully showed signs of wiping or light brushing.

Pottery from the enclosure

Sixty seven sherds from five handmade vessels were retrieved from the enclosure ditch, a full record of these sherds is included within the online data appendix. A further five fragments from a fired clay object were also retrieved (context 7131), probably from a large object such as a loomweight, in a fine oxidised fabric with sparse quartz, quartzite and clay pellet inclusions. From this group the majority of the sherds were retrieved from one vessel (Figure 4, 49 sherds, context 7131), a nearly complete thick-walled globular jar with an everted rim. The vessel is undecorated and the form is a little unusual but globular forms have also been found at Humberstone, Leicestershire (Marsden 2000, figs 50.12, 50.18) and

Gamston (Knight 1992, figs 22.45, 22.50). This vessel was retrieved from the primary fill of the southeast corner of the enclosure (7127). The deposition of a nearly complete vessel is anomalous amongst the assemblage and should perhaps be considered as a 'structured deposit' situated in the corner of the enclosure ditch (Hill 1995, 95–101). The vessel had surviving internal carbonised deposits and external deposits below the rim. Four pieces of fired clay were also recovered from the same context. All were featureless fragments made in a slightly sandy, grog-tempered fabric and probably derive from an oven or hearth lining (Seager Smith 2013).

The only other distinctive rim form present is a Scored ware jar with a rounded everted rim decorated with a slashed rim tip. The vessel is similar in form and body shape to an example from Market Deeping, Lincolnshire (Knight 2010, fig. 139.57) with the addition of deep scoring evident on the surviving shoulder fragment of the vessel. This vessel also had external carbonised deposits suggesting that both vessels may have been used for cooking.

Pottery from the roundhouse

The largest quantities of pottery from the roundhouse were retrieved from the terminal ends of the ring gully, presumably deposited near to the entrance of the structure. A single small fragment from a jar with an in-turned rim was the only diagnostic rim evident, a further vessel had scored decoration and another had scored decoration and a solid pedestal base. Whilst the deposition of finds in roundhouse structures has been extensively discussed and finds near to the entrances have been used to suggest an area of 'active domestic activity' or 'the location of a domestic midden outside the door to the house' (Pope 2007, 221), it is difficult to strongly support this on the basis of such a small assemblage. However seven from a total of twenty eight vessels retrieved from the site were recovered from the terminal ends of this ring gully. Sherds from a further five, including three with scored decoration, were retrieved from the pits inside the roundhouse.

Pottery from the pit alignment

A total of nine sherds from three handmade vessels were retrieved from one of the outlying features of the pit alignment (7056). All of the sherds were sand and sandstone tempered with no decoration or notable surface treatment evident. There is an abundant and growing literature on pit alignments with the general consensus that they were established in the first millennium BC (Thomas 2003; Rylatt and Bevan 2007; Bradley and Yates 2007) although typologically diagnostic sherds from the primary fills of pit alignments are seldom common in this region (Knight and Howard 2004, 102). In this instance the presence of Iron Age pottery would support the general consensus for dating these features although the sherds from this site could not be dated more closely.

Conclusions

This small group finds parallels with the published pottery from Gamston and groups from Holme Pierrepont (Knight 1992; Elsdon 1996), but the fragmentary nature of the material and the scattered small groups in which it was found limit interpretation. The group fits into the general range of pottery that has already been found from this region suggesting that the inhabitants mostly used sandstone, quartz and quartzite-gritted wares and no shell-gritted wares were present. This small assemblage retrieved suggests that limited quantities of pottery were used and disposed of on this site.



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