

8 Pottery from Lambsdale Leans by Ewan Campbell

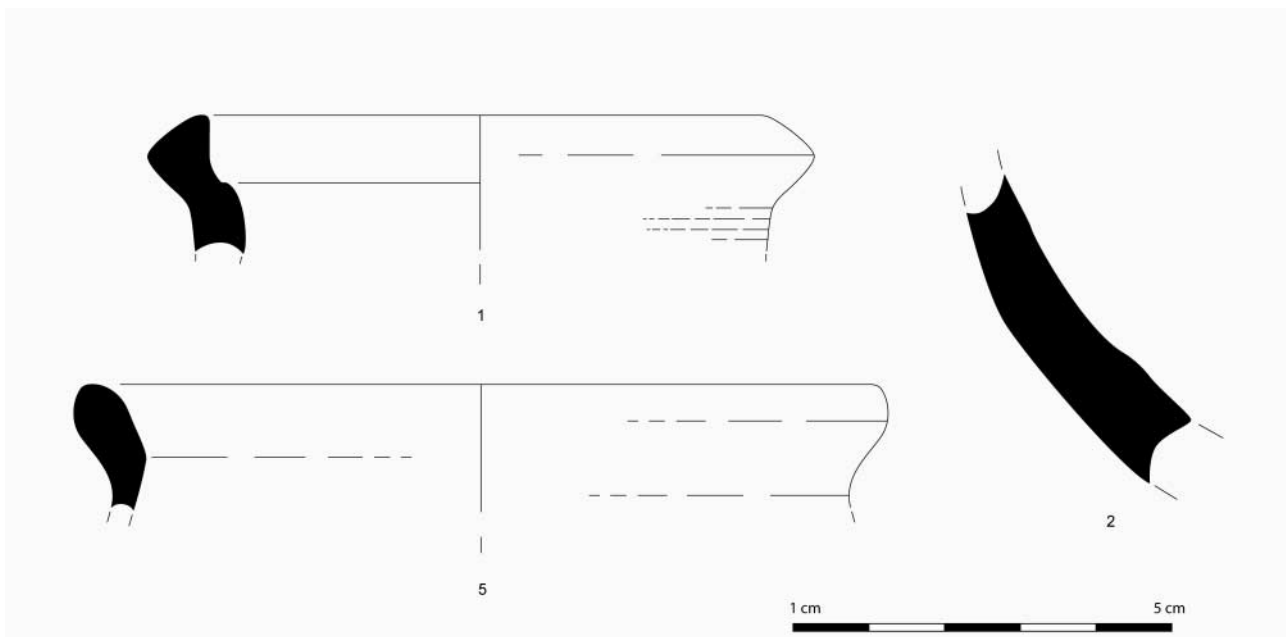
Almost all the pottery is unstratified, and therefore can only give a possible indication of the overall date range of occupation of the site. None of the sherds look prehistoric, and most appear to be medieval. The earliest sherds are from a single grass-tempered handmade vessel whose form cannot be determined (nos. 7–10). This type of fabric is often found in Norse-period assemblages in the Caithness region (Gaimster 1986), though in other areas such as the Western Isles grass-tempering is not chronologically significant, being found in Iron Age and later fabrics (Lane 1990). Most of the remainder of the sherds fall into a generally later tradition of medieval oxidised wheel-thrown vessels. There are a number of different fabrics though they share similarities. Two rims are present (nos. 1 and 5), but neither are easy to date very precisely as there is so little comparable material in this area (McCarthy & Brooks 1988, illus 113). They appear to be from small globular pots, which by comparison with the few northern or western assemblages are probably of 12th–13th centuries AD date (*ibid*, illus. 114, no. 530; Armit *et al in prep.*). The fabrics are not particularly well-fired, and are probably of local production. There are no examples of identifiable 13th–14th century types such as East Coast White Gritty or Red Sandy wares which were widely distributed. There is a scarcity of identifiable post-medieval wares which one would expect if occupation had continued into the 17th century or later, though no. 6 may be of this date. The glass from Cutting C is the only other object which might be late in date, but is also

unstratified. [*Ed.*: Robin Murdoch kindly comments that it is part of the kick-up from a wine bottle, of small diameter and hand-finished, late 18th–early 19th century. He notes that the opaque grey-blue colour is the result of a flaw in the manufacturing process.] Two other pottery sherds (nos. 13 & 14) are from handmade vessels but have no distinctive features. They could belong to the Late Iron Age or Norse periods.

The pottery suggests a mainly medieval date for the occupation, with a possible beginning in the Norse period and lasting till the 12–13th centuries, with only casual occupation at later dates.

*In the list below, RD = Rim Diameter, T = thickness, * indicates material illustrated*

- 1.* Rim sherd from small globular vessel with everted rim. Wheel thrown or wheel turned. Fabric soft, orange-brown, scattered sub-angular quartz grits > 1 mm. Rim with deeply incised lid-seat. Carbon deposits on exterior. RD 90mm. Layer 1, cutting A, top burnt layer (Section 7.5, finds bag 1).
- 2–4.* Three bodysherds from near base, same vessel as 1. Indications of flat or sagging base. T 7–11 mm. Same context as no 1.
- 5* Rim, everted. Wheel thrown, medium hard, orange fabric, sparsely gritted with mixed subangular quartz and other minerals. RD 110 mm. Layer 5, cutting E, unstratified (Section 7.5, finds bag 5).
- 6 Bodysherd. Wheel thrown, rilling on interior, exterior wiped. Fabric orange, medium hard, ungritted. Layer 5, cutting E, unstratified (Section 7.5, finds bag 5).
- 7–10. Four bodysherds of thin-walled vessel, handmade. Fabric medium hard, buff to grey, no grits but sparse



Illus 19 Lambsdale Leans mound: the medieval pottery

coarse organic temper. T 4–7 mm. Layer 3, cutting B, unstratified (Section 7.5, finds bag 3).

11–12. Two joining bodysherds of large wheel thrown vessel. Fabric medium hard, similar to no 1, above. T 8–11 mm. Layer 3, cutting B, unstratified (Section 7.5, finds bag 3).

13. Bodysherd, handmade coil-formed vessel. Fabric grey to buff, medium hard, few grits. Layer 4, cutting C, unstratified (Section 7.5, finds bag 4).

14. Possible basal sherd, very abraded, in similar fabric to no. 13. Layer 3, cutting B, unstratified (Section 7.5, finds bag 3).

15. Small bodysherd, similar fabric to no. 11. Layer 3, cutting B, unstratified (Section 7.5, finds bag 3).

[report written 1997, revised 2002]