The Saxon Pottery

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The site at Marcham produced only *c.* 412 recognisable Saxon pottery sherds, nearly all from one Saxon feature in MFP Trench 6. A small amount of organic and sand-tempered Saxon sherds (23) were also found in a small shallow pit [5003] in MFP Trench 5, although no other Saxon finds or potential Saxon features were found in the entire trench, so the presence of a tiny amount of Saxon pottery here is a mystery. Most of the Saxon pottery found on the site is a coarse hand-made ware with mixed inclusions such as quartz, shell, and sometimes also organics. This fabric is very similar to Iron Age fabrics found on the site, so a note of caution must be made here. With the exception of the pottery found in the one recognisable Saxon feature in MFP Trench 6 (Saxon Sunken Floored Building (SFB), Group No. [6003]) which based on various aspects of the feature itself can securely be said to be Saxon - the site produced many sherds of a similar fabric type in established Iron Age features, as well as other general layers. It is possible that some of the more undiagnostic coarse ware fabrics designated as prehistoric from general layers might be Early Saxon. It is only the very diagnostic organic tempered fabrics, which are clearly of Saxon date, that an early Saxon date can be securely given based on the fabric alone, rather than being dependant on the nature and stratigraphy of the features in which the sherds were found. Unfortunately, most of the potential Saxon sherds discovered were plain body sherds with no decoration, as were many of the Iron Age sherds, so the possibility remains that there may have been slightly large quantities of Saxon pottery than was recorded. However, apart from SFB [6003], no other definite Saxon features were found in the MFP zone or indeed across the whole site and no other types of Saxon finds were discovered outside of that one Saxon structure – so it is unlikely that much Saxon pottery was missed in the identification procedure.

Three major Saxon fabrics were identified, namely SAXO (Saxon Organic, heavily tempered with organic or chaff materials and with a smooth soapy feel), SAXCW (Saxon Coarse Ware, coarse fabric with mixed ill-sorted quartz and shell inclusions and sometimes some organic), and SAXFW (Saxon Fine Ware, finer fabric, mostly with quartz or sand inclusions). No decorated sherds of Saxon date were found, nor was there much in the way of identifiable rims or forms. The bulk of the fabrics fell into the SAXCW group (*c.* 336 sherds), followed by 57 SAXO sherds and finally 19 SAXFW sherds. Of the 412 Saxon sherds found in MFP Trench 6, 404 were found in the SFB (Group [6003]. The handful of possible sherds found outside this feature consisted of five potentially intrusive Saxon sherds in the fill of the terminal end of Iron Age NW/SE Ditch group [6185], two sherds which may be Iron Age or intrusive Saxon sherds found in small pit [6068] and one sherd found in the cleaning layer. Figure 1 below shows which features in MFP Trench 6 produced Saxon sherds and also shows how many sherds of Iron Age or Roman pottery were found in the same contexts.

The SFB Group [6003] consisted of the main outer cut of the structure, pit cut [6123] and the inner sunken part of the structure, cut [6122] as well as two internal postholes (see Trench narrative for Trench MFP6, this website). The Saxon pottery was found in almost equal quantities throughout the various fills in the main cut [6123] at 99 sherds, and the inner sunken cut [6122] at 205 sherds. As well as the Saxon pottery, the fills of the main cut [6123] produced a very distinctive Early Saxon find, namely the Saxon double sided antler composite comb SF 489. Two other small finds of deliberate pierced late Roman coins were

found in the fills of the Saxon feature (SF 554 in a middle fill of cut 6123; and SF 556 in the basal fill of cut 6122). These pierced Roman coins are typical of the early Saxon re-use of various types of Roman metalwork.

Context	IA POT	ROM POT	SAXON POT	FABRIC TYPE
6002	16	2	1	1x SAXCW?
6044	55	0	5	4x SAXCW, 1x SAXFW
6067	0	0	2	2x SAXCW? Or IA?
6083	3	3	32	32x SAXCW
6084	0	1	8	8x SAXCW
6085	14	0	42	37x SAXCW, 5x SAXO
6095	0	0	1	1x SAXCW
6103	0	1	41	33x SAXO, 8 SAXFW
6108	0	0	3	3x SAXCW
6109	0	2	50	40x SAXCW, 10 x SAXFW
6119	0	1	17	Ix SAXO,16x SAXCW
6120	0	0	3	3x SAXCW
6143	0	0	21	18x SAXO and 3x SAXCW
6145	0	0	14	14x SAXCW
6146	0	0	10	10x SAXCW
6147	0	0	2	2x SAXCW
6164	0	1	118	118x SAXCW
6165	0	0	1	1x SAXCW
6166	0	1	10	10x SAXCW
6167	0	0	1	1x SAXO
6177	0	1	25	25x SAXCW
6178	0	0	5	5x SAXCW
SAXON POT			**412x**	

Figure 1. Contexts with Saxon sherds in Trench MFP6

With the bulk of the Saxon pottery assemblage being made up of undiagnostic coarse ware body sherds, precise dating for the Saxon period by the pottery alone would be difficult. However, the organic or 'grass-tempered' sherds are a secure indicator of the Early Saxon period *c.* 5th/6th centuries CE. Furthermore, the SFB in which most of the Saxon pottery was found is a type of structure strongly associated with the Early Saxon period, as is the composite antler comb found alongside the Saxon pottery sherds and the pierced late Roman coins found in the same feature. Therefore, though the bulk of the Saxon pottery assemblage is made up of the more undiagnostic Saxon Coarse Ware fabrics, which are not very closely dateable – the conclusion must be that these are also of Early Saxon date. Of obvious significance here is the evidence for the Saxon settlement and cemetery to the north on both

sides of the A338 (see the main site narrative for more details), making this SFB one of the most southerly.