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IMPORTED ROMAN POTTERY FROM
TRETURGY, CORNWALL.

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Summary

Identification of imported amphorae and red slip ware suggesting pre-Roman, Roman and post-Roman occupation on the site. Amongst the amphorae sherds present are the Italian wine carrier Dressel 1, which probably arrived sometime during the first century B.C., and the Spanish olive-oil form Dressel 20, which could have arrived anytime from the Late Iron Age to the 3rd Century A.D. There are also some amphorae types which suggest a Late Roman and/or a post-Roman date for the site. These forms are represented by sherds of British B iv, B i and B ii amphorae, all from an Eastern Mediterranean source. A sherd of fine red slip ware may be Phocaeen ware (Late Roman C), suggesting a date soon after c. 500 A.D.

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AMPHORAE

Dressel 1sp

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Bodysherd probably belonging to the Dressel 1sp amphora form. It is not possible to say whether it is the 1A or 1B type of this amphora which is represented here. Both forms were made in Italy and normally carried wine. The 1A form was made from about 130 B.C. till around the middle of the first century B.C., while the 1B form appears to have been made shortly after the first quarter of the first century B.C. till the last decade of the century (see refs. in Peacock and Williams, 1986). This suggests that the Trethurgy vessel may have arrived at the site sometime during the first century B.C. Amphorae of this date are comparatively rare in Cornwall, although a spike most likely from a Dressel 1A has recently been recovered at nearby Carn Euny (Christie, 1978).

The Trethurgy sherd is in a distinctive 'black sand' fabric - caused by dark-coloured grains of augite - which occurs in both the 1A and 1B forms. The presence of yellow (melanitic) garnet in this fabric led Courtois and Velde (1973) to suggest an origin in the Latium region. However, yellow-brown garnet is also a feature of the sands further south, and a Campanian origin, in particular the area around Pompeii and Herculaneum, has been advocated by Peacock (1977a). Further analysis by Velde and Courtois (1983) using an electron microprobe has distinguished two separate compositional groups of yellow garnet, of which one source they

propose is situated near to Rome and another in the Vesuvius region. The latter view agrees with Peacock's (1977a) suggestion, but as yet there is no archaeological evidence for an origin near Rome for the 'black sand' fabric. A Campanian origin seems more likely, since examples of bricks and tiles in the Pompeii - Herculaneum region are in an identical fabric (Peacock, 1977a).

Dressel 20

8, 176, 357, 446, 489, 613, 767, 872.

Eight bodysherds of Dressel 20. This is the most common amphora form imported into Roman Britain, though it is clear that it was already present in some numbers during the late Iron Age (Williams and Peacock, 1983). Dressel 20 amphorae were made along the banks of the River Guadalquivir and its tributaries between Seville and Cordoba in the southern Spanish province of Baetica, where they were used for the transportation of olive-oil (Ponsich, 1974; 1979). This type of amphora has a wide date-range, from the Augustan prototype (Oberaden 83) to the well-known globular vessel which, with some typological variation was in use up to and possibly beyond the late third century A.D. (Peacock and Williams, 1986).

British Biv (Peacock and Williams, 1986, Class 45)

P12, 319.

Fairly hard, deep red or reddish-brown fabric, heavily micaceous, with a decorative scheme of broad shallow fluting. Two bodysherds which probably belong to an amphora of the Biv form, with slender neck, high rounded shoulder and a tapering foot. A broad shallow ribbing covers most of the vessel, which is comparatively thin-walled. This amphora form, with some typological changes, has a long tradition in the Mediterranean region and a widespread distribution. The earlier form has one strap-handle and first appears in the late first century A.D. (Lang, 1955, 277-278; Panella, 1973, 460-422). The later two-handled version is first found in late fourth century A.D. contexts at San Vecchio in Rome (Annis, 1975,

31, nos. 1 and 2) and also at Carthage (Riley, 1981). At Carthage there was a peak in numbers of Biv during the Vandal period, c. A.D. 475, followed by a reduction until the sixth century A.D. when numbers increase again (Fulford and Peacock, 1984). The contents carried are unknown.

In Britain the one-handled form generally occurs in late Roman or post-Roman contexts (Peacock, 1977b; Thomas, 1981). A complete example from Ospringe in Kent, however, was associated with a second century A.D. glass vessel, though this may have been an heirloom and a later date for the amphora is possible (Peacock, 1977b).

British B_i (Peacock and Williams, 1986, Class 43)

2, 63, 82, 92, 108, 130, 199, 235, 281, 637.

Fairly hard, smooth fabric, pinkish-cream throughout. Inclusions of white limestone are commonly visible. This form has a globular body with a small basal knob, a short conical neck with a high everted rim and bowed handles from the shoulder to the neck. The upper part of the body contains deep horizontal grooves closely set together; these are normally straight but a wavy version, apparently later in date, also occurs. All the Trethurgy material is represented by small bodysherds. A thin section was made of no. 108 and study under the petrological microscope revealed a similar fabric described by Peacock in his analysis of B_i sherds from Glastonbury Tor, i.e., a clay matrix composed mainly of limestone and mica with a little chert, plagioclase feldspar and metamorphic quartzite (Peacock, 1971).

B_i amphorae are widely distributed around the Mediterranean seaboard and are also present in Roumania, Italy and Istanbul as well as Britain (see Peacock and Williams, 1986 for refs.). The numbers found in the northern Aegean and Black Sea area may suggest a possible source in this region. However, a suspected kiln site for B_i amphora has been discovered near Kounopi in the Argolid (Munn, 1985). With this in mind it is worth noting that at Athens there are coarse pottery forms in similar fabrics to B_i amphorae, which may add weight to the idea of a reasonably

local source (e.g. Robinson, 1959, M226, M321, M371).

Bi amphorae occur in fourth century A.D. contexts at Athens (Robinson, 1959, M272), while at Carthage there is a noticeable increase in numbers there from about the middle of the sixth century A.D. and production appears to have ceased by the late sixth/early seventh century A.D. (Fulford and Peacock, 1984). The principal content carried is unknown.

British Bii (Peacock and Williams, 1986, Class 44)

121, 122, 180a, 184, 221, 256, 434, 500, 524, 565, 569, 666, 743, 801, 802, 933, 954.

With the exception of no. 524, part of a handle, the remainder of the material consists of small bodysherds, some showing evidence of a wide ribbing. It is difficult to be certain that each sherd has been correctly identified as some of them are very small and most are in a friable state, but the majority are probably from the Bii form. A thin section of no. 221 shows that the most prominent inclusions are grains of quartz, fragments of cryptocrystalline limestone, serpentine and some pyroxene grains. This assemblage agrees with that commonly associated with the Bii amphora, suggesting a source area which has ultra-basic as well as sedimentary rocks (Peacock and Williams, 1986). With these geological considerations in mind, the Antioch region of northern Syria, an area which had a robust contemporary olive-oil export trade (Liebeschuetz, 1972), appears attractive. However, other possible source areas have been suggested, amongst them Cyprus, as some Bii vessels have painted inscriptions of the Cypriot modius (Lang, 1976). Cyprus would qualify petrologically as it contains outcrops of ultra-basic rocks, but apparently the form is not particularly common on the island (information from L. Nehru).

Bii amphorae have a very wide distribution around the Mediterranean, Aegean and Black Sea regions, as well as reaching Britain in small numbers (see Peacock and Williams, 1986 for refs.; Thomas, 1981 for the British material). They date from

the early fifth to the mid seventh centuries A.D., reaching a peak in the later fifth and early sixth centuries A.D. (Fulford and Peacock, 1986). The principal content is not known, although olive-oil has been suggested (Thomas, 1959).

Fine Ware

There are four small friable sherds, some with signs of a red slip: 1, 46, 248 and 678. Due to the presence of Bi, Bii and Biv sherds in post-Roman levels at Trethurgy it was originally thought that these may all be Phocaeen red slip ware (Late Roman C), since there are many examples in post-Roman south-west Britain (Thomas, 1981). No. 248 appears to be the most likely candidate, the small section of rim that remains possibly belonging to Hayes form 3 (1972). A thin section from this sherd revealed inclusions of small quartz, flecks of mica, some grains of plagioclase feldspar and a few fragments of lava. The area of Phocaea in western Turkey now considered to be a major production centre for what used to be termed Late Roman C ware (Hayes, 1980) contains volcanic rocks. The petrology of the Trethurgy sherd would fit in with the geology of the Phocaea area, but not enough work has been done on the fabric of Phocaeen red slip ware to make the identification positive. The remaining three sherds all appear to be of a slightly coarser fabric than that normally associated by the writer with Phocaeen red slip ware. Due to their smallness and state of preservation it is difficult to suggest what they might be with any confidence.

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