

Ancient Monuments Laboratory
Report 180/87

A BLACK-BURNISHED WARE DISH FROM
WAREHAM, DORSET.

D F Williams PhD FSA

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Summary

Identification of a BB1 'fish-dish' made in the Wareham-Poole Harbour area and dated to the end of the third century A.D. - fourth century.

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Trench 7 (1)

Handmade sherd with a small loop-handle and plain-rim, roughly burnished all over, dark grey in colour (Munsell 10YR 4/1) with a sandy fabric. This sherd belongs to the black-burnished ware category 1 (BB1) class of vessels, and in this particular case can be assigned to the large production centre based on the Wareham - Poole Harbour area that operated throughout most of the Roman occupation of Britain (Williams, 1977, Group 1). It comes from a two-handled so-called 'fish-dish' (*ibid.*, Fig. 3, no. 4). This form is oval in shape rather than circular, usually half as long again as it is wide and with a small circular handle at either end of the long axis. An inscribed 'diabolo' design consisting of a pair of triangles united at the apex commonly appears on the inside of the base, while scribbled patterns frequently occur on the underside. The external walls are normally undecorated. Unfortunately the Wareham sherd is too small to show if any of these patterns are present.

This type of vessel emerged late in the third century A.D. and continued in use throughout most of the fourth century. Its distribution seems to have been more limited than other Dorset BB1 forms. It is not found in the north or eastern parts of the country for example, and instead appears to be confined to the south, south-west and the Midlands.

Reference

- Williams, D.F. (1977) 'The Romano-British black-burnished industry: an essay on characterization by heavy mineral analysis', in D.P.S. Peacock (ed.), Pottery and Early Commerce (London, 1977), 163-220.