

Ancient Monuments Laboratory  
Report 136/88

ROMAN POTTERY FROM GILLINGHAM,  
DORSET.

D F Williams PhD FSA

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Summary

Thin sections were studied of three representative sherds from the site, all submitted as possible amphorae. One of the sherds comes from a southern Spanish olive-oil amphora. Another is probably from a flagon rather than an amphora, and the third appears to be from a storage vessel, possibly made fairly locally.

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1) CML 75 (1) 3

Bodysherd from the globular-shaped amphora type Dressel 20. This form of amphorae was used to transport by sea the olive-oil produced in the southern Spanish province of Baetica, and was made along the banks of the River Guadalquivir and its tributaries between Seville and Cordoba. Dressel 20 has a long date-range, and with some typological variation was in use from the late first century B.C. up to at least the late third century A.D. (Peacock and Williams, 1986). It is the most common amphorae type imported into Roman Britain (Williams and Peacock, 1983).

2) CML 75 (5A) 2

Bodysherd with slight stub of handle in a soft sandy fabric, greyish-buff (between Munsell 7.5YR 7/2 and 7/4) in colour. Thin sectioning and study under the petrological microscope shows little else but grains of quartz and flecks of mica set in an optically anisotropic clay matrix, giving little indication of origins. It is difficult to be sure of the form involved here. It might be an amphora, but the relatively small width of the handle may point instead to a flagon.

3) CML 75 (5A) 1

Fairly hard, thick rough fabric, light grey (5YR 7/1) in colour. Thin sectioning shows a groundmass of well-sorted quartz grains mainly under 0.10mm in size, some flecks of mica and a scatter of (?) shale like inclusions. This sherd is unlikely to be from an amphora, rather it is more likely to be from a large storage vessel. It is possible that it may have been fairly locally made, since the Kimmeridge Clay which overlies Gillingham contains frequent pieces of shale (1" Geological Survey Map no. 297).

References

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