

Ancient Monuments Laboratory
Report 180/88

ROMAN AMPHORAE FROM COUNTY HALL,
DORCHESTER, DORSET.

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Summary

Examination of some 144 amphorae sherds resulted in the identification of the following types; Dressel 20, Dressel 2-4, Pélíchet 47, North African and southern Spanish. The majority of sherds belonged to the Spanish olive-oil form Dressel 20, while there were proportionately fewer sherds of the southern French wine amphora Pélíchet 47 than at the other Dorchester sites of Greyhound Yard and Methodist Chapel (A.M.Lab report no 25/88).

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Introduction

The amphorae recovered from the County Hall site comprised 144 sherds which were classified by fabric and form. These were mostly bodysherds, some of them quite small, but included in the total are a few rims and handles. By far and away the most common type represented amongst this material is the southern Spanish globular olive-oil amphora Dressel 20. Four fragments of rim were found encompassing the period from just after the mid first century A.D. to the mid second century A.D. In addition, small numbers of sherds belonging to the forms Dressel 2-4, Pélíchet 47, North African and southern Spanish are also present. There appears to be proportionately fewer sherds of the common southern French wine-amphora Pélíchet 47 at County Hall than are recorded in the amphorae seen by the writer at the other Dorchester sites of Greyhound Yard and Methodist Chapel (A.M. Lab. report no. 25/88).

Numbers of Individual Sherds for each Amphorae Type:

Dressel 20	111
Dressel 2-4	1
Pélichet 47	17
North African	2
Southern Spanish	1
Unassigned	<u>12</u>
	<u>144</u>

Dressel 20

This is the most common amphora type imported into Roman Britain. 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 long-distance transportation of olive-oil (Ponsich, 1974; 1979). This type of amphora has a wide date-range, from the Augustan period up to at least the late third century A.D. (Peacock and Williams, Classes 24 and 25). The four rims from County Hall can be paralleled with examples from August illustrated by Martin-Kilcher (1983) in her scheme for the developement of the Dressel 20 rim:

0332	Dated at August A.D. 55-75 (<u>ibid.</u> , no. 15).
0201	" " " late 1st century A.D. - early 2nd century (<u>ibid.</u> , no. 17).
0139	" " " " " " " " " (<u>ibid.</u> , no. 20).
0218	" " " mid 2nd century A.D. (<u>ibid.</u> , no. 27).

Three part-handles were noted (0139, 0343 and 0428). The latter contains a worn stamp in ansa which may read LFEC (or G). This stamp is noted by Callender (1965, no. 853a) and is associated with Dressel 20 production sites in Baetica (Ponsich, 1982).

Bodysherds: 0089, 0123, 0061, 0330, 0322, 0311(2), 0139(25), 0028(7), 0141, 0203, 0122(3), 0204(7), 0201, 0332(2), 0152(6), 0140(2), 0002, 0052(2), 0298(10), 0362, 0343, 0357(4), 0432, 0455, 0456, 0333(3), 0378, 0552, 0522(5), 0389, 0334, 0423, 0479(7),

Dressel 2-4

A small bodysherd (0302) in the distinctive 'black sand' fabric which probably belongs to this form. This particular fabric is generally thought to indicate an origin in the area around Pompeii and Herculaneum (Peacock and Williams, 1986, Class 10). This form usually held wine.

Pélichet 47 / Gauloise 4

This is a flat-bottomed wine amphora type predominantly made in southern France, more especially around the mouth of the Rhône in Languedoc, where a number of kilns are known (Laubenheimer, 1985). In Britain, Pélichet 47 does not appear to be present in pre-Boudiccan levels (Peacock, 1978). Production continues until at least the early fourth century A.D. (Laubenheimer, 1985).

Handles: 0204, 0063, 0348.

Bodysherds: 0098, 0311, 0222, 0298(4), 0378(2), 0552, 0522, 0387(2), 0479.

North African

Two small bodysherds from a North African cylindrical amphora (0151). In Britain these forms of amphorae occur as early as the mid second century A.D. (Tyers, 1984), though the majority probably arrived during the third and fourth centuries A.D. (Peacock, 1977). It is usual to associate these vessels with carrying olive-oil, though fish products may also have been transported to a lesser extent (Beltrán, 1978; Keay, 1984). A rim of the Keay Type XXV dated to the last quarter of the third century A.D. to the middle of the fifth century was present at the nearby Greyhound Yard site (A.M. Lab. report no. 25/88).

Southern Spanish

A small bodysherd from a southern Spanish amphora (0311). This probably carried fish-based products and may have arrived at the site during the first or second century A.D. (Peacock, 1971; 1974).

Unassigned

0093, 0330(2), 0152, 0389 (small handle ?flagon), 0423, 0479 (handle), 0483, 0436, 0063(stub of handle), 0477, 344(not sure if this is a rim with handle attached or part of the neck which has been broken off and smoothed over).

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