

Ancient Monuments Laboratory
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THE ROMAN AMPHORAE FROM EXETER,
DEVON.

D F Williams PhD FSA

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Summary

An examination of some 300 sherds of amphorae resulted in the identification of the following types: Dressel 20, Camulodunum 185A, Camulodunum 186A, southern Spanish, Pelichet 47, Peacock & Williams Class 59, Carrot type Peacock & Williams Class 66, Rhodian style, Richborough 527, Dressel 2-4, Hollow Foot and North African cylindrical. From this it is clear that the site was receiving olive-oil and fish products from southern Spain, olive-oil from north Africa and wine from France, Rhodes and Italy.

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THE ROMAN AMPHORAE FROM EXETER, DEVON

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Introduction

No complete amphora was found during the excavations, but a number of rims, handles and spikes were recovered, together with many bodysherds. The amphorae as a whole were classified by fabric and form, and in order to consider the material quantitatively were then weighed and counted. The classification of types is based on Dressel (1899), the Camulodunum series (Hawkes and Hull, 1947), Pélichet (1946), Laubenheimer (1985) and Peacock and Williams (1986), supplemented by descriptive terms suggested by Peacock (1971; 1977a) and in common usage (Peacock and Williams, 1986). Brief notes on the origins and chronological span of the amphorae are given below.

The greater number of sherds present (plus weight) belong to the southern Spanish olive-oil amphora Dressel 20, though the large size and heavy weight of this type may slightly distort the picture presented in Table 1. However, relatively large numbers of Dressel 20 have already been found in Exeter and there seems little doubt that this is the most common amphora form imported to the site (Bidwell, 1979, Table 10; Holbrook, forthcoming). The only other probable olive-oil amphora amongst the present material is represented by a North African Africana II rim, a type already noted at Exeter, but unfortunately unstratified (Holbrook, forthcoming). Wine amphorae are represented mainly by two, perhaps three, Rhodian style vessels, and an indeterminate number of Pélichet 47 from southern France. The only other recognizable wine amphora is Dressel

2-4, represented by only two sherds, although the type is fairly common in the fortress area at Exeter (ibid.). Amongst the remaining amphorae, fish-based products undoubtedly arrived in the southern Spanish and Camulodunum 186 forms, while defrutum may have been contained in the southern Spanish Camulodunum 185A and French Peacock and Williams Class 59, though it is not yet certain if this was the main content carried in these vessels. The contents of the other amphora forms at Exeter are unknown, and while these types almost certainly arrived in small quantities compared with the more important forms mentioned above, they nevertheless give some indication of the variety of foodstuffs that must have been available in Exeter and the trading contacts of the province as a whole.

Total weight of amphorae	33,917gms
Total number of amphorae sherds	305

TABLE 1

% Total of Each Amphora Fabric

	<u>% By Weight</u>		<u>% By Count</u>	
Dressel 20	16,932gms	49.9%	128	42.0%
Camulodunum 185A	520gms	1.5%	3	1.0%
Camulodunum 186A	320gms	0.9%	3	1.0%
Camulodunum 186sp	900gms	2.7%	12	3.9%
Southern Spanish	2,820gms	8.3%	18	5.9%
Pélichet 47	4,493gms	13.3%	48	15.7%
Peacock & Williams				
Class 59	2,290gms	6.8%	22	7.2%
Carrot type	235gms	0.7%	2	0.7%
Peacock & Williams				
Class 66	167gms	0.5%	11	3.6%
Rhodian style	1,090gms	3.2%	12	3.9%
Richborough 527	437gms	1.3%	1	0.3%
Dressel 2-4	142gms	0.4%	2	0.7%
Hollow Foot	180gms	0.5%	2	0.7%
North African	750gms	2.2%	1	0.3%
Unassigned	2,641gms	7.8%	40	13.1%

Dressel 20

Rims: L1016, BSE 80 291-1, PS/82 L529, BSE 80 20.

Handles: F859, 928, F1003/2, L752 1/4, L475, 503, F776(2), FH 81 787, 630.

Basal wort: 789.

Bodysherds: L849, 780, L810, 921, 822/2, 928(2), L1017, 999/1, F999/2, L1016, F915/5(5), 930, 115/2, 630, 714, F447 7/4(17), F473, 492, 339/5(3), F492/1(4), L482, F776(3), FH 81 799(3), QS 79 365(2), FH 81 793(2), FH 81 L786/3 15/4(2), FH 81 L786 8/4(4), FH 81 787(6), 783/2(3), 789(2), PS 83 1830, PS 83 +(2), PS 84 3062, PS 85 3025, BSE 80 287, PS 84 3050(2), BSE 80 F666, PS 82 361(3), PS 82 620, PS 84 1432(2), BSE 80 L328, PS 83 1745(2), BSE 80 F59(11), PS 82 361, BSE 80 unstrat, PS 83 1608, PS 83 1775, PS 82 F426/4, NP 83 111, NP 83 111/2, NP 83 93, HL 74 F72/3, BSE 80 20, PS 83 1820.

The squat globular Dressel 20 is the commonest amphorae form found in Roman Britain. It was made in large numbers along the banks of the River Guadalquivir and its tributaries between Seville and Cordoba in the southern Spanish province of Baetica, and was used to carry the locally produced olive-oil (Peacock and Williams, 1986, Class 25). The span of production of this type covers three centuries, and on the evidence of the likely dates associated with the rims recovered from Exeter it was imported to the site over a lengthy period of time. All of the four rims from the site can be paralleled with dated examples from Augst illustrated by Martin-Kilcher (1983) in her scheme for the development of the Dressel 20 rim:

- 1) BSE 80 20 Dated at Augst to the third quarter of the first century A.D. (ibid., no. 12 or 14).
- 2) L1016 Dated at Augst mid first century A.D. to mid second century (ibid., no. 17).

- 3) PS 82 L529 Dated at Augst mid second century A.D. (ibid., no. 27).
4) BSE 80 281/1 Dated at Augst second half of the second century A.D. to the early third century (ibid., no. 34 or 36).

One of the handles (F776) contains a stamp in ansa, L. F. O. This stamp is listed by Callender (1965, no. 856) and may represent L. Fabius Optatus, who is attested to in Baetica. Callender tentatively dates the stamp c. A.D. 30-80.

Camulodunum 185A

Handle: 783/2.

Bodysherds: 783/2(2).

One handle and two bodysherds which may belong to the amphora form Camulodunum 185A / Haltern 70, which was made from about the middle of the first century B.C. to about the middle of the first century A.D. (Peacock and Williams, 1986, Class 15). The similarity of fabric with the more common Dressel 20 suggests that Camulodunum 185A was probably made in the same region, though it appears to have held defrutum rather than olive-oil (see Colls et al., 1977; van der Werff, 1984).

Camulodunum 186A

Rims: L772, L1016, 789.

Three fragments of rim from separate vessels of the southern Spanish amphora form Camulodunum 186A / Beltrán I which transported fish sauces such as garum and liquamen as well as sometimes salted fish (Peacock and Williams, 1986, Class 17). The date range for this particular type stretched from the late first

century B.C. to the early second century A.D.

Camulodunum 186sp

Handle: BSE 80 L584.

Bodysherds: L1016(11).

It is difficult to decide whether these sherds belong to the Camulodunum 186A type mentioned above, or to the slightly later form Camulodunum 186C / Beltrán IIA, dated from the Flavian period, or slightly before, to the early second century A.D. (ibid., Class 18). Both varieties were made along the southern Spanish coast and seem to have transported similar fish-based products.

Southern Spanish

Bodysherds: 823, 921(4), 734, 321(3), L1017, F1002, F915/5(5), PS 82 L525, NP
83 98.

This material most probably derives from the coastal regions of southern Spain and seems to have been mainly used to carry fish-based products from the late first century B.C. to the second century A.D. (Peacock, 1971; 1974).

Pélichet 47

Rims: L772.

Handles: L810.

Base: QS 79 365.

Bodysherds: 841(2), F818/1, F840, L810, L772, 936, F915/5(2), F473, L420(2),
492, 446, F1350/2, QS 79 365(3), FH 81 L803 10/4, FH 81 787, 783/2(6)
PS 84 3063(4), PS 83 1656(2), BSE 80 454(5), BSE 83 1435, BSE 80 706,
BSE 80 58, PS 83 1775(2), PS 82 F426/4, GS 71 410, NY 78 L1133.

Pélichet 47 / Gauloise 4 is a flat-bottomed wine amphora form made predominantly in southern France, notably in the region around the mouth of the Rhône in Languedoc, where a large number of kilns have been discovered in recent years (Laubenheimer, 1985; Peacock and Williams, 1986, Class 27). Importation to Britain started after the Boudiccan revolt and continued until at least the third century A.D. During the second century A.D. it is the commonest wine amphora found on British sites.

Peacock and Williams, Class 59

Rims: L1030, L968, L794.

Bodysherds: L1030(3), L1031(2), L956(5), F915/5(8), F993

All of the above rims are slightly different, L968 has only a narrow groove below the rim while the other rims have a much deeper and wider groove, and so must represent three vessels. This particular amphora form, only recently classified, was said to have originated from Baetica in southern Spain (Sealey, 1985, 167). However, we know now that it was instead produced at Lyon in France

during the first and early second century A.D., possibly imitating the Baetican amphora Camulodunum 185A (Desbat, 1987, Fig. 2, nos. 3 and 4). An example from the Pan Sand wreck in the Thames Estuary contained about 6000 olive stones, though it is not known whether olives or ?defrutum was carried on a regular basis in these vessels (Sealey, 1985, 167).

Carrot type

Rim: BSE 80 20.

Base: L1394.

One rounded rim sherd and a small narrow base which belong to the unusual shaped carrot amphora (Peacock and Williams, 1986, Class 12). The origin and contents of this form are unknown, although given the relatively small size of these vessels, dates have been tentatively suggested as a possible commodity that was carried (Reusch, 1970). Carrot amphorae are often associated with early military sites in Britain and Germany, occurring at Wiesbaden and Vindonissa in early first century A.D. contexts and Claudian Hofheim and Claudian-Neronian Colchester (ibid.; Hawkes and Hull, 1947; Sealey, 1985). They are found after A.D. 7 at Fishbourne, though it is difficult to be precise about a possible terminal date (Cunliffe, 1971).

Peacock and Williams, Class 66

Bodysherds: 823(7), L1482(4).

These eleven sherds are in a similar fabric to that normally associated with carrot amphorae, but the girth of the vessel (or vessels) suggested by the

curvature of the sherds points to a larger-sized amphora being represented, possibly the large 'cigar-shaped' amphora illustrated by Peacock and Williams as their Class 66 (1986). The type-specimen from Kingsholm is also rilled and may come from the same general area as the carrot form, it was found in first century A.D. contexts (Timby, 1985, Fig. 28, no. 117).

Rhodian style

Rim: L1005.

Peaked handles: L1005, F964, F999/2.

Bodysherds: 822/2(3), L1005, 1034(2), 468(2).

There are at least two, perhaps three, vessels represented here. The rim, handle and bodysherd marked L1005 are probably from the same vessel, and the handle marked F964 possibly belongs to them as well. All of them are in Peacock's Fabric 1, while the remainder of the Rhodian material appears to be in his Fabric 2 (1977a). Both of these Rhodian style amphora fabrics are commonly found on early military sites in Britain and almost certainly originate from Rhodes itself, possibly by way of a tribute of wine imposed on the island by Claudius (ibid.).

Richborough 527

Bodysherd: F1350/2.

A single bodysherd in the distinctive coarse greyish-green fabric which characterizes the Richborough 527 form (Peacock and Williams, 1986, Class 13). Recent study of this heavy elongate amphora type by the writer and Paul Arthur has pointed to a possible source in Campania rather than the Massif Central region of France, which had previously been favoured partly due to the high number of finds recorded in that country (forthcoming; Peacock, 1977a). The majority of the British and French finds date to the first century A.D. (ibid.), although it is now clear that production lasted much longer than this. Three Richborough 527 vessels have recently been found in early to mid third century A.D. deposits at New Fresh Wharf, London, while a large number recovered from the site of the Temple of Augustus at Pozzuoli are dated to the later second century A.D. / early third century (Green, 1986; Williams and Arthur, forthcoming). The contents, however, are still unknown, although the wide mouth may indicate some kind of fruit rather than a liquid.

Dressel 2-4

Bifid handle: L459.

Bodysherd: 948.

Part of a bifid handle which almost certainly belongs to the Dressel 2-4 amphora form. This type was made in considerable quantity in many different countries of the western Roman Empire, and to some extent in the east as well, from the late first century B.C. to round about the middle of the second

century A.D., and normally carried wine (Peacock and Williams, 1986, Class 10). The bodysherd (948) is in the distinctive 'black sand' fabric generally considered to come from the region around Pompeii and Herculaneum, and probably belongs to a vessel of this form (Peacock, 1977b).

Hollow Foot

Handle: MY 78 L1026/2.

Bodysherd: L1026/2.

Two sherds, probably from the same vessel, of a hollow foot amphora (Peacock and Williams, 1986, Class 47). The origin and the contents carried are unknown, but the form probably comes from the eastern Mediterranean region where the majority have been found. Hollow foot amphora are commonly found on sites dating to the third and fourth centuries A.D., although they may begin as early as the end of the second century A.D. (Panella, 1973; Peacock, 1977c).

North African

Rim: L1394.

A rim belonging to a North African cylindrical amphora, and probably coming within the typological range of the Africana II series that had its origin in Tunisia (Peacock and Williams, 1986, Class 34; Keay, 1984, Type VI). This form had a long time-span, from the second half of the third century A.D. to

the end of the fourth/fifth century (ibid.). In Britain, most of the North African cylindrical amphorae appear to have arrived during the third, fourth and to some extent fifth centuries A.D., although they are attested to as early as the mid second century A.D. (Peacock, 1977a; Tyers, 1984). Olive-oil is generally assumed to have been the main commodity carried, but fish products were also exported to a lesser extent in these vessels (Beltrán, 1978; Keay, 1984).

Unassigned

Rim: 930.

Base: 823.

Bodysherds: 813(18), 823, 817, 753, 771, 339/2, FH 81 800, L788, BSE 80 L643, BSE 80 unstrat, PS 83 1775, PS 82 F426/4, BSE 80 L319(3), BSE 80 20(4), PS 84 3074, PS 83 1820.

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