

Ancient Monuments Laboratory
Report 109/89

ROMAN AMPHORAE FROM THE 1989
EXCAVATIONS AT SANDY, BEDFORDSHIRE.

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Summary

An examination of 340 sherds of amphorae resulted in the identification of the following types: Dressel 20 from southern Spain, Pelichet 47 and possibly Gauloise 7 from southern France, and Peacock and Williams, Class 59, in all likelihood from Lyon in France. This suggests that the main amphora-born supplies reaching the settlement consisted of olive-oil and wine, with possibly olives or defrutum in the latter form.

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ROMAN AMPHORAE FROM THE 1989 EXCAVATIONS AT SANDY, BEDFORDSHIRE

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Introduction

Well over three hundred amphorae sherds were recovered from the 1989 excavations at Sandy, mostly plain bodysherds, and these were examined and identified where possible. The classification of types used here is based on Dressel (1899), Péllichet (1946), Laubenheimer (1985) and Peacock and Williams (1986).

TABLE 1

% Total of each fabric type

	<u>% By Weight</u>		<u>% By Count</u>	
Dressel 20	43,417gms	95.8%	304	89.4%
Gallic	1,040gms	2.3%	18	5.3%
Peacock & Williams				
Class 59	105gms	0.2%	2	0.6%
Undesignated	774gms	1.7%	16	4.7%
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	45,336gms		340 sherds	

Dressel 20

796(6), 832, 793, 945(2), 703, 970, 743, 674, 919, 902, 1007, 836(3), 799(7),
258(33), 525, 527(2), 528(6), 575(2), 538, 534, 597, 543, 472, 405(4), 460(4),
435(4), 425(30), 249, 228(3), 209(2), 293, 208(2), 206, 274, 248(5), 254(6),
234(14), u/s(2), 207(3), 210(4), 322(4), 391, 316, 385(3), 367, 390(3), 358(12),
411/13(4), 836, 828(5), 233(5), 273(5), 214(10), (1)(16), 324, 370, 366, 364(7),
313(25), 312, 667, 885, 217, 678, 685, 211(27), 224, 880.

The vast majority of the amphorae sherds from Sandy can be attributed to the southern Spanish globular form Dressel 20, which carried the local olive-oil from the region of the River Guadalquivir in the province of Baetica (Peacock and Williams, 1986, Class 25). This amphorae type was in production for some three centuries and is a common find on Romano-British sites. Seven rims were recovered from Sandy, and all of them can be roughly paralleled in Martin-Kilcher's scheme for the development of the Dressel 20 rim at Augst (1983):

- 1). 828 Dated at Augst late first century A.D. - early second century (ibid, no. 2)
- 2). 233 " " " (ibid, no. 2)
- 3). 273 " " " (ibid, no. 2)
- 4). 324 " " " (ibid, no. 2)
- 5). 836 Dated at Augst c. 110-170 A.D. (ibid, no. 32)
- 6). 313 " " (ibid, no. 32)
- 7). 411/13 Dated at Augst mid second century A.D. (ibid, no. 27)

Three complete handles (678, u/s) and four small parts (405, 460, 425, 667) were found, all unstamped, and three basal worts (258, 527, 411/13). Two bodysherds with slight handle stubs remaining had deliberately 'rounded' edges, suggesting that the neck of the vessel had been cut off for use as some form of container(258). A number of the sherds showed evidence of burning.

Gallic Amphorae

228(2), 248, 326, 591, (1)(2), 364(2), 888(4), 217(2), 312, 667.

The presence of a rim (248) and handle (1) belonging to the flat-bottomed amphora form Pélichet 47 / Gauloise 4, suggests that most of the plain bodysherds here also belong to this type, which was made predominantly in southern France, especially around the mouth of the Rhône in Languedoc (Laubenheimer, 1985; Peacock and Williams, 1986, Class 27). This amphora type carried wine, and importation to Britain seems to have started after the Boudiccan revolt and lasted until at least the third century A.D.

However, also in this little group are two rim sherds (312, 667) which look to be Gallic in fabric and which may possibly be variations on the Gauloise 7 type, another of the flat-bottomed southern French amphora forms (Laubenheimer, 1985). The two rims from Sandy, both from different vessels and in a light red to orangy-buff sandy fabric, have a flattish rim which has been slightly scalloped on the inner edge. Gauloise 7 is known to have been made at kilns at Aspiran, Velaux-Moulin Du Pont and Frejas,^{and} seems to have been in production during the first and second centuries A.D. (ibid.). Another possible Gauloise 7 vessel has been noted by the writer from Beddington, Carsholton, Surrey.

Peacock & Williams, Class 59

977, 936.

A rim (977), and a bodysherd (936) which appears to be in a similar fabric, of a form only recently classified. The Sandy rim sherd is rounded with two grooves on the outer surface just below the rim, one deeper than the other,

and is in a light buff slightly micaceous fabric. Complete examples of this form show a long spindle-shaped body with a solid spike, a bead-like rim with one, sometimes two grooves near the top and oval handles with a slight central groove. A southern Spanish origin was at one time proposed for this type (Sealey, 1985, 167), but we know now that it was instead produced at Lyon in France during the first and early second centuries A.D., possibly imitating the Baetican amphorae Camulodunum 185A (Desbat, 1987, Fig. 2, nos. 3 and 4). The nature of the contents are somewhat uncertain, though an example from the Pan San wreck in the Thames Estuary contained nearly 6000 olive stones, which suggests that either olives or ?defrutum may have been carried (Sealey, 1985, 167).

Undesignated

522, 460, 293, 208(2), 791(handle), (1)(3 - flagon?), 370(handle), 364(handle - flagon?), 313(handle - flagon?), 309(handle - flagon?), 226, 390(base), 936.

Non-Amphorae

749(flagon), 274, 390(mortarium?), 358(9 - brick/tile?), 411/13(brick?), 836 (mortarium?), 233(mortarium?), 214(5 - 2 mortarium?), (1)(6 - 1 mortarium?), 313(flagon), 312(3 - bricks?).

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