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AMPHORAE FROM EXCAVATIONS AT
WROXETER BATHS 'MAIN HADRIANIC
CONSTRUCTION' LEVELS

D F Williams PhD FSA

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Summary

An examination of nearly 650 amphorae sherds allowed the identification of a variety of types from a number of widely differing sources. Easily the most common form present was the Baetican olive-oil container Dressel 20. Smaller amounts were also noted of several types of southern Spanish vessels, and Gauloise 4, Dressel 2-4, Rhodian, carrot, Richborough 527 and P & W Class 16.

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AMPHORAE FROM EXCAVATIONS AT WROXETER BATHS 'MAIN
HADRIANIC CONSTRUCTION' LEVELS

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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. Almost 650 amphorae sherds are represented here, and these are classified below according to fabric and form. The classification of types is based on Dressel (1899), Beltran (1970), Laubenheimer (1985), the Camulodunum series (Hawkes and Hull, 1947) and Peacock and Williams (1986), supplemented by descriptive terms suggested by Peacock (1971; 1977) and in common usage (Peacock and Williams, 1986). The two most common amphorae forms present are the southern Spanish globular olive-oil vessel Dressel 20 and the flat-bottomed southern French wine container Gauloise 4. This is entirely in keeping with our knowledge of amphorae imports into Roman Britain during the first half of the second century A.D. By this time imports of wine in the bifid-handled Dressel 2-4, so common in first century A.D. contexts, have been greatly reduced. The

sherds of Rhodian wine amphora from Wroxeter, together with those of the enigmatic carrot amphora, may well be residual in this context. The remaining identified amphorae are mostly southern Spanish fish-produce vessels, although there is also a handle of Richborough 527, now thought to come from Italy. Brief notes on the origins and chronological span of these amphorae types are given below.

% Total of each fabric

	% By Weight		Count	
Dressel 20	33,685gms	73.9%	442	68.3%
Dressel 2-4	216gms	0.5%	2	0.3%
Gauloise 4	3,126gms	6.9%	80	12.2%
Camulodunum 186A	470gms	1.0%	22	3.4%
Camulodunum 186C	181gms	0.4%	2	0.3%
Camulodunum 186sp	3,408gms	7.5%	23	3.5%
Southern Spanish	587gms	1.3%	8	1.2%
Rhodian	1,712gms	3.8%	26	4.0%
Carrot	104gms	0.2%	9	1.4%
P&W Class 16	192gms	0.4%	2	0.3%
Richborough 527	185gms	0.4%	1	0.2%
Undesignated	1,677gms	3.7%	32	4.9%
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	45,543gms		649	sherds

Dressel 20

This is the most common form of amphorae found in Britain. They were imported in a small way prior to the Roman Conquest and reached their peak in terms of numbers around the middle of the second century A.D. (Williams and Peacock, 1983). 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, and carried the local olive-oil (Ponsich, 1974; 1979).

Ten Dressel 20 rims were recovered from Wroxeter, all of which can be roughly paralleled with examples illustrated by Martin-Kilcher (1983) in her scheme for the development of Dressel 20 at Augst:

- [1] WB 92 4. Dated at Augst c. A.D. 75-125 (*ibid.*, no. 17).
- [2] WB 35 8 Dated at Augst c. A.D. 75-125 (*ibid.*, no. 23).
- [3] WB 35 8 (*ibid.*, no. 25)
- [4] WB 90 157 Dated at Augst c. A.D. 75-175 (*ibid.*, nos. 20, 27 and 30).
- [5] WB 83 + Dated at Augst late first century A.D. - early second century (*ibid.*, no. 20).
- [6] WB 83 + Dated at Augst late first century A.D. - early second century A.D. (*ibid.*, no. 23).
- [7] WB 78 3 Dated at Augst late first century A.D. - mid second century A.D. (*ibid.*, no. 30).
- [8] WB 83 + Dated at Augst late first century A.D. -

mid second century (*ibid.*, no. 30).

[9] WB 86 16 Dated at Augst late first century A.D. to the second half of the second century A.D. (*ibid.*, nos. 30 and 32).

[10] WB 90 125 Dated at Augst c. A.D. 120-175 (*ibid.*, no. 29).

Two of the Dressel 20 handles were stamped:

[1] WB 84 49

Part of a handle attached to the body, containing a worn and incomplete stamp, possibly reading [?]R..M E[orF].. *in ansa* downwards from just below the summit of the handle.

[2] WB 88 6

Part of a handle containing an incomplete stamp reading L V A *in ansa* downwards from the summit of the handle. It may well be that the letters are in fact complete and only the end of the cartouche is missing, since the stamp L V A [L. VALE AME] is known in this abbreviated form as well as with accompanying palm-branch and additional letters (Callender, 1965, no 963; Remesal, 1986, no. 264) It is associated with the *figlina* at Dehesa de Arriba, on the north bank of the River Guadalquivir, east of Posadas (Ponsich, 1979, 149), and appears to be Flavian-Trajanic in date (*ibid.*; Remesal, 1986).

List of Dressel 20 sherds in context:

WB 2

28[3].

WB 7

12, 21.

WB 35

8[b/s + 2 rims].

WB 40

4[handle].

WB 7B

3[complete rim].

WB 83

113, 530, 544[2], 534[3], 536[3b/s + handle], +[b/s +
handle + three rims].

WB 84

48[2 b/s + handle], 49[4 b/s + stamped handle], 52[2 b/s
+ handle], 56, 75, 77[2], 81[2], 100, 137[10].

WB 85

123, 127.

WB 86

16[b/s + rim], 24.

WB 87

101.

WB 88

6[stamped handle].

WB 90

142[2], 158, 109, 191[2], 186, 91, 141[3], 138, 125[rim],
161[5], 178[2], 173[2], 152[3], 87[neck & handle stub],
157[rim], 167, 178[5], 212[2], 169, 179[6].

WB 91

18[21 b/s + handle], 23[handle], 85 [268 - many flakes
plus a loose lead rivet], 93.

WB 92

4[rim], 18[3].

WB 97

121[6], 131, 133[3], 137.

WB 98

61[4], 77, 52[14], 68[12b/s + handle].

Dressel 2-4

These two sherds may belong to the amphora form Dressel 2-4, which appears to have been made in an increasing number of locations and predominantly carried wine (Peacock and Williams, Class 10). It was produced from the latter half of the first century B.C., though by the latter part of the first century A.D. its numbers had decreased considerably.

WB 84

?52[neck junction with body].

WB 97

133.

Gauloise 4

This is the distinctive flat-bottomed wine amphora from southern France (Laubenheimer, 1985). Importation into Roman Britain started sometime soon after the Boudiccan revolt (Peacock, 1978), and by the early second century A.D. this form had become the most common wine amphora in the province.

WB g

20.

WB 34

7.

WB 83

534[2], 42[2], 52, 25, 536[rim + handle], + [2 b/s + rim
+ handle].

WB 84

77[5], 106, 81[11], 48.

WB 85

224, 127[2 b/s + handle].

WB 86

62.

WB 90

48, 72, 161[5], 157[2], 178[2], 222, 179.

WB 91

23, 89.

WB 92

9.

WB 97

121[handle], 133[11], 131.

WB 98

61, 52[12], 83.

Camulodunum 186A

These sherds are from the southern Spanish amphora form Camulodunum 186A/Beltran I, which carried fish sauces such as *garum* and *liquamen*, and sometimes also salted fish (Peacock and Williams, 1986, Class 17). The form was still being produced by the early second century A.D.

WB 84

137[21 b/s + rim].

Camulodunum 186C

Camulodunum 186C/Beltran IIA is a somewhat similar form to the previous type, though with a distinctive hooked rim, and was made in the same region of Spain and carried the same range of produce (*ibid.*, Class 18). It was also produced up to around the early second century A.D.

WB 83

+ [2 rims].

Camulodunum 186sp

As both of the Camulodunum 186 varieties listed above share a common range of fabrics, it has not proved possible to decide to which of these forms the sherds below belong to.

WB 83

53, 55[6], 544[2], 81, 534[3 b/s + handle], 536[2 b/s + handle], +[base].

WB 84

45, 100.

WB 90

161[b/s + handle].

Southern Spanish

This material probably originates from the coastal regions of southern Spain. The vessels concerned appear to have been mainly used to transport fish-based products from the late first century B.C. to the second century A.D. (Peacock, 1971; 1974).

WB 83

55.

WB 84

62, 49.

WB 90

179.

WB 97

131, 133.

WB 98

52[2].

Rhodian Style

All of the sherds listed below belong to the Rhodian style amphora (Peacock and Williams, 1986, Class 9). All except one sherd [WB91 23] belong to Peacock's Fabric Group 2, and that single sherd belongs to his Fabric Group 1 (1977). Both of these fabrics almost certainly come from the Rhodian Peraea (*ibid.*), where a number of amphorae production sites making this form have recently been discovered (Empereur and Tuna, 1989). Rhodian style amphora, which predominantly carried wine, are often found on early Roman military sites in Britain, and most probably arrived by way of a tribute imposed by Claudius (Peacock, 1977). Production of the form seems to have gone into the early second century A.D.

WB 5

36.

WB 7

9.

WB 35

8.

WB 83

42[2], 55[3], 536[handle], III ii[handle].

WB 84

52[4 b/s].

WB 88

II 10.

WB 91

23[handle], 93[handle].

WB 92

18[6b/s + handle].

WB 97

121[2].

Carrot

The origin and contents carried of these small and distinctively-shaped amphorae is unknown (Peacock and Williams, 1986, Class 12). An origin in the levant has been tentatively put forward in the past, but the dearth of finds in this region points to a source elsewhere. Like the Rhodian style amphorae above, carrot amphorae are often found on early military sites in Britain, and at an earlier date in Germany (Reusch, 1970; Hawkes and Hull, 1947; Sealey, 1985). They are found after A.D. 75 at Fishbourne, though at present it is difficult to be certain exactly when they cease production (Cunliffe, 1971). The slight nuances of fabrics displayed by the

sherds listed below suggest that the minimum number of vessels represented here is five.

WB 4

21.

WB 49

166, 168[2].

WB 84

48.

WB 85

215.

WB 91

89.

WB 97

133.

WB 98

52.

P&W Class 16

It is difficult to be certain, but the triangular-shaped rim and the handle, both from separate vessels, may belong to a series of typologically linked amphorae,

all likely to be of Spanish origin (Peacock and Williams, 1986, Class 16). Fish products were probably normally carried, from the late first century A.D. to the first century A.D.

WB 83

536[rim], +[handle].

Richborough 527

A single handle in the characteristic coarse greyish-green volcanic fabric which belongs to the Richborough 527 form (Peacock and Williams, 1986, Class 13). A recent programme of study of this heavy elongate amphora form by the writer and Paul Arthur, has suggested a likely origin in Campania, Italy (forthcoming). This is in preference to the Massif Central region of France, which had previously been thought to be a possible source, partly due to the comparatively high number of finds of Richborough 527 in that country (Peacock, 1977). The majority of the British finds date to the first century A.D., although it is now clear that production of this form 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 in London, while a large number recovered from excavations at 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 carried are still

unknown, although the wide mouth may indicate some kind of fruit rather than a liquid.

WB 63

2[handle].

Undesignated

WB a

16.

WB 50

1.

WB 83

42, 52, 55, 111[handle].

WB 84

49, 81[2], 52, 62, 77[ribbed handle- possibly from a Dressel 28 or P&W Class 16 vessel], 156.

WB 85

127.

WB 87

101.

WB 88

5[2], 6.

WB 90

178, 169, 100, 179.

WB 91

18.

WB 92

18, 45.

WB 97

133[3].

WB 98

61, 138, 52[2].

Amphora Stopper

Part of a small thin stopper used to help seal the neck of an amphora, in a sandy off-white fabric. The form is similar to those used for Dressel 20 and Haltern 70 vessels recovered from the Port-Vendres II shipwreck (Colls *et al*, 1977, Fig. 14).

WB 90

160-F788.

Non-Amphorae

WB 83

534[?mortarium rim], +[mortarium + flagon rim].

WB 84

52[mortarium].

WB 87

401[mortarium].

WB 90

191, 47[?water-pipe], 170[mortarium], 161[mortarium].

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