

Ancient Monuments Laboratory  
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ROMAN AMPHORAE FROM STANWICK  
VILLA, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

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Summary

The collection of amphorae sherds from Stanwick is not especially large, totalling 114 sherds that probably represent a minimum of some 14 individual vessels. However, it does give a very good impression of the range of amphorae found on a Romano-British villa site, and one suspects that this was perhaps the norm for many rural sites of this type.

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Author's address :-

D F Williams  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON  
Highfields  
Southampton  
HANTS  
SO9 5NH

ROMAN AMPHORAE FROM STANWICK VILLA, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

D.F. Williams, Ph.D., FSA

[English Heritage Ceramic &amp; Lithic Petrology Project]

Department of Archaeology, University of Southampton

TABLE OF AMPHORAE SHERDS

	Number	Weight
Dressel 20	62	9,080 gms
Gauloise 4	47	1,720 gms
Dressel 2-4	1	182 gms
Southern Spanish	2	132 gms
Unassigned	2	166 gms
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Totals	114	11,280 gms

COMMENTS

The amphorae sherds recovered from Stanwick consist of 3 rims, 10 handles, a base and 100 bodysherds. Considered as a whole, this probably represents a minimum of some fourteen vessels. All but 5 of the sherds can be assigned either to the southern Spanish form Dressel 20, which was

used as a long-distance container for the olive-oil produced in the region of the River Guadalquivir, or to the flat-bottomed south Gauloise wine amphora type Gauloise 4 [Peacock and Williams, 1986, Classes 25 and 27]. Dressel 20 is slightly more common on the site than Gauloise 4, with 62 sherds as against 47, and 9,080gms weight compared with 1,720gms. However, it is difficult to directly compare the weight of these two types as Dressel 20 sherds tend to be thick and heavy whereas Gauloise 4 sherds, apart from those belonging to the lower section of the amphora, are by comparison thin and lightweight.

These two forms are the most commonly encountered amphorae found on most types of Romano-British sites. Both were produced over a long period, although with some typological variation. The two Dressel 20 rims from Stanwick can readily be placed in the form series established by Martin-Kilcher at Augst, where the large numbers of these vessels found in dated contexts allowed an evolutionary scheme to be drawn up for the development of the Dressel 20 rim [1987]. Both of the Stanwick rims seem to have been in common use during the second half of the second century A.D, at a time of the greatest importation of Baetican olive-oil into Roman Britain [*ibid.*, nos. 94 and 100; Williams and Peacock, 1983, Fig. 2]. It is possible of course that some of the Dressel 20 material could be earlier or indeed later than this date. Importation of Dressel 20 amphora commenced before the Roman Conquest of Britain and lasted until shortly after

the middle years of the third century A.D. [*ibid.*;  
Carreras and Williams, forthcoming].

Unfortunately, there are no diagnostic Gauloise 4 sherds present at Stanwick to suggest a particular date within the period of export to Britain of this type, which is post-Boudiccan to perhaps the late third century A.D. [Peacock, 1978; Laubenheimer, 1985].

In addition to the above two forms, there are four or five other amphora types represented in the group. A plain bodysherd in a slightly micaceous reddish-brown fabric most likely comes from a Dressel 2-4 vessel, in all probability originating from Italy or the eastern Mediterranean region [Peacock and Williams, 1986, Class 10]. In Britain, the majority of the Dressel 2-4 imports date to the period covering the latter first century B.C. and first century A.D. This amphora type seems normally to have carried wine. Two light coloured slightly sandy sherds probably belong to one of the many amphora forms produced along the southern Spanish coastline, and which were used to transport the local fish-based products [*ibid.*, Classes 16 to 19]. The vessel, or vessels, represented by these two sherds probably belongs to the first two centuries A.D.

There are also two unidentified sherds. One is a rim sherd in a granular light greyish-buff fabric. This has a thickish everted rim with what might be the first ring of a possible ring-necked form. It is difficult to know if this is indeed an amphora or instead, and perhaps more likely, a large flagon [cf. for example Frere, 1972,



Figs. 111, 102 and 116]. The fabric is somewhat reminiscent of Brockley Hill ware, though another source is quite likely [cf. Castle, 1974, Fig. 3]. The other unclassified sherd is a flattish handle in a light coloured fairly fine-textured fabric. Again possibly from a large flagon or perhaps a flat-bottomed amphora.

For the most part this is a small group of common amphora types such as one might expect from a rural Romano-British site. However, one interesting feature of three of the six Dressel 20 handles from Stanwick, is that they display clear signs of being sawn off at a point approaching the summit of the handle, with the cutting marks quite visible. Chopping off the narrow top section of amphorae and using the remaining wider part as a large receptical seems to have been a fairly widespread practice, especially for the globular-shaped Dressel 20. Quite often these vessels then served as a repository for a burial. There are slight fabric differences in each of the above handles suggesting that they represent three separate vessels.

CATALOGUE OF SHERDS [Site Code 291]

DRESSEL 20

*Rims:*

77505/66439, 65090/77503.

*Handles:*

0980/94901 [with a deep cut mark], 1628/94903 [with a series of cut marks], 8081/94906, 84662/94961, 82866/71011, 3511/94904.

*Basal worts:*

45097/94937.

*Bodysherds:*

8739/94921, 8838/94922, 8368/94913, 8264/94908, 9839/94930+94967 [2 sherds], 9376/94927, 8302/94911 [4 sherds], 8845/94923, 9467/94928, 8303/94912, 8722/94916, 8736/94920, 9526/94929, 46119/94947, 45430/94941, 47290/94965, 45036/94939, 45634/94945, 45033/94934, 45996/94946, 45436/94942, 45009/94933, 45306/94935, 65241, 83649, 45270/94938, 89017/94962, 83649/94963, 86375/94957, 45446/94944, 82711/71009, 8871/94968, 9138/94926, 0980/0950/94900, 3201/94902, 3549/94905, 9033/94925, 8722/94917, 65452/77501, 45446/94943, 83676/94959, 45040/94936, 77502/65429, 65013,

88376/94960, 89518/94952, 89513/94951, 84288/94954,  
84639/74201.

GAULOISE 4

*Handles:*

8279/94910, 8088/94966, 37781/94931.

*Bodysherds:*

8279/94909, 45306/94940[2 sherds], 46566/94949,  
45001/94932, 46581/94964, 84259/94953, 81367/71007,  
46259/94948[8 sherds], 81316/71001-6[6 sherds],  
81832/71008, 8723/94918, 8728/94919[2 sherds],  
8722/94915[2 sherds], 88370/94958[14 sherds from the same  
vessel, very abraded], 8381/94914, 81395/71010.

SOUTHERN SPANISH

*Bodysherds:*

88026/94965, 84269/94955.

DRESSEL 2-4

Bodysherd:

88064/94950.



UNASSIGNED*Rim:*

77504/66043.

*Handle:*

8870/94924.

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