

Ancient Monuments Laboratory
Report 79/96

ROMAN AMPHORAE FROM FOLLY LANE
AND OTHER SITES AT ST. ALBANS,
HERTFORDSHIRE

D F Williams

AML reports are interim reports which make available the results of specialist investigations in advance of full publication. They are not subject to external refereeing and their conclusions may sometimes have to be modified in the light of archaeological information that was not available at the time of the investigation. Readers are therefore asked to consult the author before citing the report in any publication and to consult the final excavation report when available.

Opinions expressed in AML reports are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England.

Ancient Monuments Laboratory Report 79/96

ROMAN AMPHORAE FROM FOLLY LANE AND
OTHER SITES AT ST. ALBANS,
HERTFORDSHIRE

D F Williams

Summary

Ninety broken amphorae sherds were examined from the Chieftain's Burial Pit at Folly Lane, which is closely dated to around AD 50. These appear to represent a minimum of 4-6 vessels, all of them belonging to the Dressel 2-4 wine amphora type and all Italian in origin, probably from the Tyrrhenian coast. It is interesting to note that some ten years later Italian wine imports seem to have been noticeably reduced, for over half of the 44 Dressel 2-4 types present at the nearby site of Sheepen were non-Italian in origin.

An identification was also made of 1,582 amphorae sherds from other sites in St. Albans of variable date. The Baetican olive-oil container Dressel 20 accounts for well over 90% of weight and count of these sherds, with a small number of French and Italian wine amphorae and a few sherds from a late Roman Palestinian form.

Author's address :-

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

ROMAN AMPHORAE FROM FOLLY LANE AND OTHER SITES AT ST.
ALBANS, HERTFORDSHIRE

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

[English Heritage Ceramic & Lithic Petrology Project]

Department of Archaeology, University of Southampton

TABLE I: CHIEFTAIN'S BURIAL PIT: FOLLY LANE

Dressel 2-4	90 sherds	5,637gms
-------------	-----------	----------

COMMENTS

Ninety amphorae sherds were recovered from the area of the Chieftain's Burial Pit, Folly Lane, which has been dated to the mid first century A.D. [Niblett, 1992]. Eighty-seven were plain bodysherds, often small, burnt and very friable. Three were small handle sections in the form of single rods. However, the latter were not completely rounded and a narrow flattish area can be made out running along the length of the rods. These undoubtedly formed part of the typical long bifid-handle arrangement, made from two joining rods side-by-side, that is characteristic of the Dressel 2-4 amphora form

[Peacock and Williams, 1986, Class 10]. All of the bodysherds tend to be relatively thin-walled. This, together with the closeness of fabric between a large group of bodysherds and the three handles, and the general fabric similarities of the group as a whole [see below], suggest it is likely that all eighty-seven bodysherds also belong to the Dressel 2-4 form rather than say the much earlier Republican Dressel 1 amphora.

The Dressel 2-4 type of amphora has a simple bead-rim, a pronounced shoulder and a long cylindrical body which develops into a solid, often slightly flared spike. The average liquid capacity of these vessels seems to have been in the region of 27 litres [Sealey, 1985]. Most of them transported wine, although on occasions other commodities were also carried [ibid.]. The form was based on Greek amphorae from the eastern Mediterranean island of Kos, and the western Meriterranean adaptation seems to have taken place in Italy around the middle of the first century B.C. [Tchernia, 1986]. Interestingly enough, for a time they seem to have been made side by side in the same range of fabrics as the earlier, and thicker-walled, amphora form Dressel 1B [ibid.].

Dressel 2-4 amphorae occur on both late Iron Age and Roman sites and come from a wide variety of sources. However, as far we can tell, the earliest examples arriving in Britain seem almost exclusively to have been Italian in origin [Williams, 1989]. At the rich chieftain's burial site at Lexden Tumulus just outside Colchester, dated c. 15-10 B.C., six Dressel 1B amphora

were recovered and eleven, possibly thirteen, Dressel 2-4, all most probably Italian [Williams, 1986]. By the time of the Boudican revolt, just over half of the forty-four Dressel 2-4 amphorae at Sheepen were non-Italian [Sealey, 1985, Table 10]. In the intervening years between these two sites more sources of supply of wine [and other commodities] had been coming onto the western market, notably from the Spanish provinces. Non-Italian wine would probably have been available to the occupant of the burial chamber at Folly Lane during the middle of the first century A.D. Was it accident or design that he, or his mourners, seems to have preferred an Italian vintage?

Fabric Groupings

A limited programme of thin sectioning, combined with a detailed examination in the hand-specimen, suggests that the 90 sherds from the burial deposits can be divided into four broad fabric groups, all of them likely to be Italian. Taking into account the slight nuances of fabric that seem to occur within Fabric 1, there would seem to be a minimum of four to six vessels present. However, it is quite possible that there are in fact more amphorae than this represented here. Much of the material examined in the hand-specimen consists of rather small friable sherds, and some of the fabric groupings, Fabric 1 for instance which contains all three of the sections of rod-

handles, may well represent more than one vessel, each of which share a similar fabric.

Thin sectioning of each of the fabric groups shows a roughly similar range of inclusions, differentiated largely on the frequency of inclusions present. The latter include grains of quartz, small pieces of cryptocrystalline limestone, microfossils, a scatter of both green and colourless clinopyroxene, discrete grains of potash and plagioclase feldspar, mica, chert and occasional volcanic material. It is difficult to try to tie down the exact source of this material at present, but the volcanic element that occurs in all of the fabrics suggests an origin along the Tyrrhenian coastal region. These vessels would almost certainly have been carrying Italian wine to Britain.

Fabric 1

Soft, very friable slightly sandy fabric, with occasional small white limestone inclusions, reddish-orange in colour:

DAG (151) handle rod, DAG (152) handle rod, DJE (23) handle rod, DAG (152) [10], DAF (75) [3], DAG (142), DAG (140), DAG (144) [4], DAG (34) [3], P?R (150), DAG (146), DAF (9), DAG (151), DAF (149), DAG (150), DAP (10), DAS (151), DAE (10), DAE (9), DAP (3), DAP (39), DAP (43), DAG (147), DAG (143), DAF (7), DAF (8), DAF (9), DAF (34), DAF (50), DAF (151), DAF (48).

The three sherds DAP (5), DAF (11) and DAF (23) may also belong to this fabric group, but they are much harder with a reddish-grey core and possibly represent perhaps two other vessels. However, the effects, or non-effects, of fire damage have to be taken into account and these sherds could simply belong to the above group. DAP (5) appears to have a patchy thin coat of black resin on part of the inner surface.

Fabric 2

Somewhat similar fabric to group 1 but much deeper red colour:

DAG (141), DAG (145), DAG (148) [4], DAF (76) [5], DAA (36).

Fabric 3

Harder fabric than the previous two groups and slightly more sandy, with frequent small white inclusions of limestone, some small dark pyroxenes and sparse golden mica. Lightish buff to red surfaces, red core:

DAE (3), DAE (4), DAE (8), DAA (16), DAA (17).

Fabric 4

Hard, sandy fabric with small white inclusions of limestone, lightish-buff outer surface, reddish-pink inner surface and core:

DAB (43) [3], , DAC (35/18) [3], DAC (29), DAC (12/27)
 [3], DAB (15) [3], DAC (97) [4], DAC (196), DAC (14), DAC
 (49), DAC (31), DAL (287).

CATALOGUE

Dressel 2-4

Part Bifid Handles:

A91/G

DAG (151), DAG (152), DJE (23).

Bodysherds:

[A91/G]

DAF (75) [3], DAG (142), DAG (140), DAG (144) [4], DAG
 (34) [3], DAG (152) [10], DAG (147), DAG (145), DAG [4],
 DAF (76) [5], DAG (143), DAF (7), DAF (23), DAF (11), DAG
 (141), DAF (9) [2], DAF (8), P?R (150), DAG (146), DAG
 (151), DAF (149), DAG (150), DAF (10), DAS (151), DAA
 (36), DAE (8), DAE (5), DAA (16), DAE (4), DAE (10), DAE
 (9), DAP (3), DAP (39), DAP (5), DAP (43) [2], DAA (17),
 DAF (34), DAF (50), DAF (151), DAF (48), DAC (97) [4],
 DAC (196), DAC (14), DAC (49), DAC (31), DAL (287), DAB
 (43) [3], DAB (15) [3], DAC (35/18) [3], DAC (29), DAC
 (12/27) [3].

TABLE II: OTHER SITES

	<u>% By Weight</u>		<u>% By Count</u>	
Dressel 20	99,384gms	97.3%	1,488	94.1%
Gauloise 4	1,232gms	1.3%	49	3.1%
"Black sand"	268gms	0.3%	10	0.6%
Dressel 2-4	141gms	0.1%	3	0.2%
Southern Spanish	234gms	0.2%	9	0.6%
Carrot	85gms	-	1	-
?Palestine	39gms	-	6	0.4%
Undesignated	822gms	0.8%	16	1.0%
Totals	102,205gms		1,582sherds	

COMMENTS

The amphorae assemblage from the remainder of the sites is dominated by the Baetican olive-oil container Dressel

20, even when one makes allowance for the propensity of this globular-shaped, thick-walled vessel to fracture into many pieces [Peacock and Williams, 1986, Class 25]. Dressel 20 accounts for well over 90% of both weight and sherd count and follows the usual pattern of this form, being the most common amphora found on the majority of Romano-British towns, as well as many other types of site [Peacock and Williams, 1983; Carreras, forthcoming]. On the evidence of the sixteen rims present, most of this material probably arrived during the period from the latter part of the first century A.D. to the end of the second century A.D., with the majority perhaps arriving in the second half of the second century A.D. Using the Dressel 20 rim typology established at the well-dated site of Augst by Martin Kilcher [1987], five of the St. Albans rims can probably be dated to the period A.D. 70-110 [E93/P2 AJB, A91/Area ABQ, A91/A BEB, A91/5A AIM, A91/A BCH+], three to A.D. 110-150 [E93/M2 ABE, A91/B BEC, A91/J CPR] and eight to A.D. 150-210 [E93/P2 AGP x2, A91/B BET, A91/C BPD, A91/B BEC, A91/C BRV, E93/P2 AGP x2]. This evidence falls nicely into place with a survey of Dressel 20 finds from a variety of sites in Roman Britain, which showed that the period of greatest importation of Baetican olive-oil was during the second half of the second century A.D. [Williams and Peacock, 1983].

In contrast to the Dressel 20 finds, the number of sherds belonging to potential wine amphora from these same deposits are noticeably fewer, accounting for only

just over 4% by sherd count of the total assemblage. The majority of this material, including part of a rim, is made up of the thin-walled, flat-bottomed amphora form from southern France, Gauloise 4 [Peacock and Williams, 1986, Class 27]. The St. Albans vessels were almost certainly imported some time between the latter part of the first century A.D. and the early fourth century A.D., [Laubenheimer, 1985].

Three small plain bodysherds, one with the beginnings of a handle stump, probably belong to the Dressel 2-4 type of amphora, of a similar form to those found in the Chieftain's Burial Pit deposit, although in this case in different fabrics. This form of amphora was produced in many different centres and had a relatively long life, for it was still being produced in Italy at the beginning of the third century A.D. [Freed, 1989]. However, Dressel 2-4 amphorae found in Roman Britain seem to have arrived mostly in the first and to some extent early second century A.D.

Also in this wine-amphora group are ten thinnish-walled plain bodysherds in the distinctive "black sand" fabric, commonly associated with production in the region around the Bay of Naples in southern Campania, and in this case probably also belonging to the Dressel 2-4 form [Peacock, 1977; Peacock and Williams, 1986, Class 10, Campanian fabric]. Because of this location, it seems likely that production of "black sand" Dressel 2-4 amphorae must have been severely disrupted by the Vesuvian eruption of A.D. 79, when much of the area around the Bay of Naples was

adversely affected. This suggests a pre-A.D. 79 date for the arrival of these sherds at St. Albans.

The "black sand" fabric was also used for a later, almond-rimmed Campanian amphora type, that seems to have been imported into Roman-Britain in limited numbers during the period from the mid third century A.D. to the mid fourth century A.D. [Arthur and Williams, 1992]. However, to date finds of this amphora form have tended to come from military sites, mainly in the north of the country. It seems on balance, therefore, more likely that the St. Albans "black sand" sherds belong to the earlier Dressel 2-4 form.

Six very hard, thin, reddish-orange to dark grey ribbed bodysherds, all belonging to the same vessel, suggest a late Roman eastern Mediterranean source. Palestinian amphorae have previously been recognized from St. Albans [VER 57 Y X (3) and C87 ABV 7] and a similar origin is a possibility for this vessel. In which case it may well have carried the wine of the region.

Only nine sherds belonging to southern Spanish "garum" amphora are present, two of which are in a fabric associated with production in the Cadiz region [A91/A BCC]. It is difficult to identify the exact forms present here, though these are probably to be found amongst Classes 16 to 19, arriving during the first two centuries A.D. [Peacock and Williams, 1986]. A large hollow spike from one of the small carrot amphora types was recovered, which can probably be dated to the first century A.D./early second century A.D. [ibid., Class 12]. A recent

find from Carlisle of a carrot bodysherd containing a titulus pictus may help to shed some light on the source of this unusual amphora form [Tomlin, 1992]. A reading of this inscription suggests that the vessel may well have been carrying the fruit of the doum palm, which seems to point to an origin in Egypt [ibid.]. However, to the best of the writer's knowledge no actual finds of carrot amphorae have been found in Egypt or in the surrounding countries.

A small number of plain bodysherds could not be identified and have been left undesignated.

CATALOGUE

DRESSEL 20

RIMS:

Fill Over Iron Age Ditch

A91/A BEB.

Main Ditch Middle Silt

A91/C BRV.

Late Roman Hollow Way

E93/P2 AGP [2].

Wells/Pits

A91/5A AIM.

Pits - Area J

A91/J CPR.

Undesignated

A 91/A BCH+, A91/B BET, A91 BEC [2], A91/C BPD, A91 Area ABQ, E93 /M2 ABE, E93/P2 AJB, E93/P2 AGP [2].

HANDLES:

Late Roman Ditch Fill/Midden

A91/C BJD [2], A91/C BPC.

Wells/Pits

A91/5A IIM [2 - from different vessels], A91/2 AIL.

Undesignated

E93/M2 ABE, E93/P2 AJS [2], E93/P2 AJB [3], A91/B BEC, A91/B ABS.

LID: [in Dressel 20 fabric]

Undesignated

E93/P1 AJS+.

BASAL WORT:

Undesignated

E93/P2 ALV, E93/P2 AJS, E93/P2 AJK.

BODYSHERDS:

Fill Over Iron Age Ditch

A91/H DBH [14], A91/A BEB [25 Plus some "splinters"],
A91/H CMC, A91/A BCF [5], A91/A BER [13 - 3 sherds
burnt].

Area G and Primary Silt Main Ditch

A91/B CAE, A91/G CXD, A91/G BPO, A91/G CLC [2].

Main Ditch Middle Silt

A91/A+ DBZ [4], A91/C BNN [4], A91/C CST(3) [4], A91/C J
CWB [5], A91/A BDG [2], A91/A CWY [5], A91/A+ DCA [2],
A91/A BDF, A91/C BNS [3], A91/C BRV [12], A91/C BPK.

Wells/Pits

A91/A BDG, A91/A CMM [12], A91/4 AIJ [15], A91/5A IIM [3]

- one with handle stump], A91/5A AIM [30], A91/2 AIL [73
- plus "splinters"]].

Pits - Area J

A91/J CPN [34], A91/J CPR [8], A91/J DKK [10 - burnt],
A91/J CPY [14], A91/J CPT.

Late Roman Hollow Way

E93/P2 AGP [91], E93/P2 AMD [4], E93/P2 AQZ PIT [2],
E93/P2 AQJ [2].

Late Roman Ditch Fill/Midden

A91/C BJD [144], A91/5A ADA [3], A91/A BJA, A91/5A BKC
[2], A91/C BPD [2], A91/C BSC, A91/C BPC [15], A91/K CTZ,
A91/C BRP.

Later Roman Burial No. 24

A91/K CWL(2) [14 plus lots of "splinters". Many of the
sherds are burnt].

Building 1

E93/P2 ALN [3], E93/P2 ALR, E93/P2 AFG, E93/P2 HHW,
E93/P2 AJK [3], E93/P2 AFS, E93/P2 AGX [3].

Pit in Area of Enclosure-Entrance

A91/B DDH [7].

Droeway

A91/L CZP, A91/L CZF [7], A91/L CZT [burnt].

Paddock

A91/K CVY, A91/K CVX [10].

Pit

E93/P2 AQG [7-some burnt].

Cess Pit

E93/P2 APR.

Cess Pit/Revised Well

E93/P2 APF [6-some burnt].

Undesignated [A/91]

/C BPD [18], /B BEC [10 - one with handle stump], /C BFW [3], /B BET [6 - one with handle stump], /C BNS [burnt], /D [3], /K CWN [17], /Z AAB [4], AAT [14], 16 ABS [3], /C BSQ [2], /C BTZ, /E BPR [3], /E BRV [26], /F BZC, DLS, /A+ DCA, DKG, DLL, DKR [6], /A+ DCH [2], /L DBC [4], DKH [2], /B BFZ, /C BPC [4], /A DHV [7], /B CYN [2], /A BDK [4], /A DHV [5], /A BDJ, /J CPR, /C BNS [burnt], /A BHB, /C BSQ, /A CLN [3], /2 AAB, /E BLQ [2], /A CWY [3], /A+ DCE [2], /B DGN, DLV [2], DKH, DLC, DLE [2], DLN [2], DLT, DMA [2], DMC [4], DLY [12], /J CRZ, /J CWE, /J CTC [4], /J CPW, /J CSR [5], /J CTF [5], /J CPA [8], /J CXC [6], /J CSE [2], /J CPA, /J CTP [3], /C BPA, /A BGA [4], /A BCH [4], /A BBR [8], /A BCH+ [9], /A BDK [2], /B BFS

[2], /C BNN, /A BCC, /C BMC, /A BDF [3-burnt], /A BCF
 [4], /L DCV, /A CNT, /K CVC, /B CYN [10], /A BJA, /A BER,
 /A BHG, /A BDG, /A BDH [2], /K CVW, /K CXN, /K CVF [5],
 /K CVA, /K CST, /K AEY [3], /B BEC [97].

Undesignated [E93]

/P2 AJS [89-some burnt], /P2 AMB [13], /P2 ALV [25], /P2
 ALX [2], /P2 AMA, /P2 AME [18], /P2 ALW [10], /M2 ABE
 [43], /M3 ABZ [2], /M4 AFA [13], /M4 AHK [2], /M4 AJP
 [3], /M4 AKF [25], /P2 AJS [56], /P2 AJS+ [9], /P1 AEL,
 /P1 AFV [2-burnt], /R4 AVA [4], /R4 ATZ [2], /MZ ABA [7],
 /MZ ABF, /MZ ABP [3], /M3 AER [7], /M3 AEY, /M3 ADP, /ME
 AEX [7], /M3 ACB, /ME ADQ [25], /M3 ADP [23], /P2 AJB
 [25], /P2 AJZ, /P2 AJB+ [4], /P2 AJB [9], /P2 AJB [3],
 /P2 AQJ [2], /P2 AMD [4], /P2 AQZ [4], /P2 AGP [19], /P2
 APJ [13].

GAULOISE 4

Rim:

A91/J CSD.

Handles:

Fill Over Iron Age Ditch

A91/A BCF.

Late Roman Ditch Fill/Midden

A91/C BJD.

Undesignated

E93/P2 AME, A91 DLC.

Bodysherds:

Area G Plus Primary Silt Main Ditch

A91/B CAE, A91/B BJC.

Late Roman Hollow Way

E93/P2 AGP.

Late Roman Ditch Fill/Midden

A91/C BJD [9 - one with handle stump], A91/C BCP [5].

Pits - Area J

A91/J CPY [5].

Wells/Pits

A91/5A AIM [2].

Paddock

A91/K CVX.

Undesignated

A91/B BEC, A91/C BPC [3], A91 DLY [2], A91/E BRV [4],
 A91/C BMC, A91/A BDF, A91/A CLN [2], A91/C BRM, E93/M3
 ADQ, E93/M3 AEX [3], E93/P2 AJB.

"BLACK SAND FABRIC"

Bodysherds:

E93/P2 AJB [4], E93/P2 AJZ, E93/P2 AJB+ [5].

DRESSEL 2-4

Bodysherds:

Area G Plus Primary Silt Main Ditch

A91/G BYP [with small handle stump], A91/B CRL [2].

SOUTHERN SPANISH

Base:

Fill over Iron Age Ditch

A91/A BEB.

Pit in Area of Enclosure-Entrance

A91/B DDH.

Bodysherds:

Fill over Iron Age Ditch

A91/A BEB [2].

Area G Plus Primary Silt Main Ditch

A91/G CCT [2].

Undesignated

A91/A DHV, A91/BCC [2].

CARROT

Base:

A91/2 AAB.

?PALESTINIAN

Bodysherds:

Later Roman Burial No. 24

A91/K CVX(2) [6].

UNASSIGNED

Bodysherds:

Main Ditch Middle Silt

A91/B VRW?

Late Roman Ditch Fill/Midden

A91/C BJD, A91/C BPC.

Burial 11

A91/A BCS (2).

Undesignated

A91/E BRV, A91/B BEC [2], E93/M3 AER, E93/M3 ADP [8].

REFERENCES

- Arthur, P. and Williams, D.F. [1992] "Campanian wine, Roman Britain and the third century A.D.", J. Roman Archaeology, 5[1992], 250-260.
- Carreras, C. [forthcoming] A spatial and economic analysis of long-distance trade: the evidence of the amphora distribution in Roman Britain.

- Freed, J. [1989] "Late stamped Dressel 2-4 amphorae from a deposit dated post A.D. 200 at villa site 10 on the Via Gabina", in *Amphores romaines et histoire economique: dix ans de recherche*. Coll. de L'Ecole Francaise de Rome, 114, 564-567.
- Laubenheimer, F. [1985] *La Production Des Amphores En Gaule Narbonnaise*, Paris.
- Martin-Kilcher, S. [1987] *Die Romischen Amphoren aus Augst und Kaiseraugst*, Bern.
- Niblett, R. [1992] "A Catuvellaunian chieftain's burial from St. Albans", *Antiquity*, 66[1992], 917-929].
- Peacock, D.P.S. [1977] "Pompeian red ware", in D.P.S. Peacock [ed.], *Pottery and Early Commerce*, London, 147-162.
- Peacock, D.P.S. and Williams, D.F. [1986] *Amphorae and the Roman Economy*, London.
- Sealey, P.R. [1985] *Amphorae from the 1970 Excavations at Colchester-Sheepen*, BAR British Series No. 142.
- Tchernia, A. [1986] *Le vin de l'Italie romaine*, Rome.
- Tomlin, R.S.O. [1992] "The Roman carrot amphora and its Egyptian provenance", *J. of Egyptian Archaeology*, 78[1992], 307-312.
- Williams, D.F. [1986] "The amphorae", in J. Foster, *The Lexden Tumulus*, BAR British Series No. 156, 124-132.
- Williams, D.F. [1989] "The impact of the Roman amphorae trade on pre-Roman Britain", in T.C. Champion [ed.], *Centre and Periphery*, London, 142-150.

Williams, D.F. and Peacock, D.P.S. [1983] "The importation of olive-oil into Roman Britain", in J.M. Blazquez and J. Remesal [eds.], Produccion y Comercio del Aceite en la Antigüedad. II Congreso, Madrid, 263-280.