

Ancient Monuments Laboratory
Report 113/91

ROMAN AMPHORAE FROM THE A5/A49
SHREWSBURY BYPASS
ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT 1989-1990

D F Williams PhD FSA

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 113/91

ROMAN AMPHORAE FROM THE A5/A49
SHREWSBURY BYPASS
ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT 1989-1990

D F Williams PhD FSA

Summary

A group of 358 amphorae sherds were examined. The majority were made up of the commonly found Spanish olive-oil vessel Dressel 20, with much lesser amounts of Gaulish and Southern Spanish material. However, of particular interest was the identification of a late Campanian 'almond-rimmed' type only recently recognized as a new form.

Author's address :-

D F Williams PhD FSA

Department of Archaeology
University of Southampton
Highfield
Southampton
SO9 5NH

ROMAN AMPHORAE FROM THE A5/A49 SHREWSBURY BYPASS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT 1989-1990

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

[HBMC ceramic Petrology Project]

Department of Archaeology, University of Southampton

Introduction

The amphorae recovered from three sites along the Shrewsbury Bypass (Meole Brace [SA 2], Duncote Farm [SA 46] and A5), were classified by fabric and form, and in order to consider the material quantitatively were then weighed and counted. Small featureless bodysherds form the bulk of the collection, many of them in an abraded state. In addition, there were also a small number of rims and handles and a single base. Four Different forms were identified, including the top section of an almond-rimmed Italian amphora, only recently recognized in this country. Of the others, the commonly found Dressel 20 dominates the assemblage, and there are smaller amounts of the southern French Gauloise 4 and southern Spanish types. Brief notes on the origins and chronological span of the amphorae are given below.

% Total of each Fabric

	% By Weight		Count	
Dressel 20	44,286gms	92.0%	317	88.5%
Almond-Rimmed type	2,732gms	5.6%	17	4.8%
Gauloise 4	641gms	1.3%	9	2.5%
Southern Spanish	305gms	0.7%	10	2.8%
Undesignated	195gms	0.4%	5	1.4%
	-----		-----	
	48,159gms		358	sherds

Dressel 20

This is the most common amphora form found in Roman Britain. Dressel 20 were already reaching southern Britain in small numbers before the Roman Conquest and they reached their peak in terms of quantities around the middle of the second century A.D., although importation continued up to and possibly beyond the late third century A.D. [Williams and Peacock, 1983]. Dressel 20 amphora 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].

Nine small pieces of rim were recovered from the Shrewsbury Bypass project, probably representing two vessels. These can be roughly paralleled with examples illustrated by Martin-Kilcher [1983] in her scheme for the development of the Dressel 20 rim at Augst:

- [1]. SA 2 1111 [residual in EG13]. All the pieces are probably paralleled at Augst by nos. 29 or 30, dated A.D. 75-175 [*ibid.*].
- [2]. A5/90/B 3129. Both sherds are fairly abraded but probably belong to the same form as Augst no. 32, dated early to mid second century A.D. [*ibid.*].

Rims: SA 2 1111[seven small fragments of abraded rim, probably from the same vessel], A5/90/B 3129[two abraded rim sherds, probably from the same vessel].

Handles: SA 2 1132, SA 2 1024, SA 2 1002.

Bodysherds: SA 2 1132[4], SA 2 1116, SA 2 1111 [51], A5/90/B 3129, A5/90/B 3134, SA 46 2015, SA 2 1224, SA 2 1024, SA 2 1016, SA 2 1040, SA 2 1006[2], SA 2 2009[2], SA 2 1020, SA 2 2000[2], A5/90/B U/8[18], A5/90/B 3128[2], A5/90/B 3137[23], SA 2 1025[88], SA 2 1074, SA 2 1073[5], SA 2 1105, SA 2 1096, SA 2 1104[2], SA 2 1085[4], SA 2 1078[12], SA 2

1005[4], SA 2 1003[2], SA 2 1006[6], SA 2
 1025[17], SA 2 1000[9], SA 2 1011, SA 2
 1041, SA 2 U/S (E) [2], SA 2 1027[3], SA 2
 1026[3], SA 46 2011, SA 2 1042[6], SA 2
 1025[4], SA 2 1038, SA 2 1072[2], SA 2
 1025[11], SA 2 1061[5].

Almond-Rimmed type

The sherds listed below belong to an Italian amphora only recently identified as a separate form, and referred to as an 'almond-rimmed' type [Arthur and Williams, forthcoming]. The Shrewsbury example, which seems to consist of the majority of the top half of a vessel, is made up of three joining rim sherds with a prominent upright almond-shaped rim; two separate handles, in section oval-shaped with a thin longitudinal groove; and a number of bodysherds [SA 2 107B from Phase III]. A single small plain bodysherd in a similar fabric to this vessel was found in a different context [SA 2 1006 residual in EG 18]. It is difficult to know if it belongs to this vessel, another one of the same type or a completely different type.

The almond-rimmed form appears to have derived from the bifid-handled amphora Dressel 2-4, which was made in Campania, as well as other places in Italy, as the successor to the late Republican form Dressel 1B [Peacock

and Williams, 1986, Class 10]. The former type was first isolated on two kiln sites in the ancient *ager Falernus* area of Campania [Arthur, 1982]. Since then other examples have been recovered from Italy, including one from Rome bearing a *titulus pictus* with the consular date of A.D. 216 [Arthur, 1987], one from Germany and some seventeen from sites in Britain, most of them with military connections [Arthur and Williams, forthcoming]. One assumes that the principal commodity carried would have been wine. The earliest known stratified examples have been found in Antonine contexts at Ostia [Panella, 1989], while production seems to have continued into the late third or even early fourth century A.D., since a number of almond-rimmed vessels have been found in contexts dating c. A.D. 250-350 at South Shields [Williams, forthcoming].

The almond-rimmed amphorae appear to have been mainly produced in northern and central Campania. All of the Shrewsbury Bypass sherds listed below are in a particularly distinctive 'black sand' reddish fabric, caused by the inclusion within the clay of numerous small dark-coloured grains of pyroxene. It is generally agreed that the source area for this fabric was the Pompeii - Herculaneum region of Campania [Peacock, 1977]. This ties in with previous analyses of almond-rimmed amphorae, which showed that the Bay of Naples region was one of the main production centres [Arthur and Williams, forthcoming]. It is a sobering thought that, in the past, this same 'black sand' fabric has commonly been

associated on British sites with the Republican Dressel 1 amphorae and the Dressel 2-4. It is quite possible, therefore, that some plain bodysherds from the later almond-rimmed form may have mistakenly been attributed to an earlier type of Italian amphora.

Rim: SA 2 1078 [three joining sherds making an almost complete rim].

Handles: SA 2 1078 [Two separate almost complete handles].

Bodysherds: SA 2 1078 [13], SA 2 1006.

Gauloise 4

This material is probably from the distinctive flat-bottomed wine amphora from southern France, Gauloise 4 [Laubenheimer, 1985]. The complete base is slightly unusual, in that it is somewhat wider than normal and also lacks the small footing which generally accompanies this form. However, the fabric is consistent with this type and occasionally examples of Gauloise 4 do occur minus the footing [*ibid.*, Fig. 142].

Importation into Roman Britain of Gauloise 4 commenced soon after the Boudiccan revolt [Peacock, 1978], and by

the early second century A.D. it had become the most common wine amphora in the province.

Base: SA 2 1078[complete].

Bodysherds: SA 2 1116, SA 2 1239[5], SA 2 1006, SA 2
1000.

Southern Spanish

The ten bodysherds listed below probably belong to amphorae which originate from the coastal regions of southern Spain, and can be expected to date to the period from the late first century B.C. to the second century A.D. [Peacock, 1971; 1974]. Fish-based products would normally have been carried.

Bodysherds: SA 2 1085[8], SA 2 1000[2].

Unknown

Bodysherds: SA 2 1247[2], SA 2 1008, SA 2 1005, SA 2
1000.

Non-Amphorae

SA 2 1085, SA 2 1006[?brick], SA 2 1000[?water pipe],
SA 2 1027.

Bibliography

- Arthur, P. [1982] 'Roman amphorae and the *ager Falernus* under the Empire', *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 50[1982], 22-33.
- Arthur, P. [1987] 'Precisazioni su di una anforica medio-imperiale dalla Campania', in *El vi a l'antiquitat. Economia, produccio i comerc al Mediterrani Occidental*, Badalona, 401-406.
- Arthur, P. and Williams, D.F. [forthcoming] 'Campanian wine, Roman Britain and the third century A.D.'
- Laubenheimer, F. [1985] *La Production Des Amphores En Gaul Narbonnaise*, Paris.
- Martin-Kilcher, S. [1983] 'Les amphores romaines a huile de Betique [Dressel 20 et 23] d'Augst [Colonia Augusta Rauricorum] et Kaiser Augst [Castrum Rauracense]. Un rapport preliminaire', in J.M. Blazquez and J. Remesal [eds.], *Produccion Y Comercio del Aceite en la Antiquedad. II Congreso.*, Madrid, 337-347.
- Panella, C. [1989] 'Le anfore italiche del II secolo d.c.', in *Amphores romaines et histore economique: dix ans de recherche*, Rome, ColleFR 114, 139-178.

- Peacock, D.P.S. [1971] 'Roman amphorae in pre-Roman Britain', in M. Jesson and D. Hill [eds.], *The Iron Age and its Hill-Forts*, Southampton, 169-188.
- Peacock, D.P.S. [1974] 'Amphorae and the Baetican fish industry', *Antiq. J.*, 54[1974], 232-243.
- 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. [1978] 'The Rhine and the problem of Gaulish wine in Roman Britain', in J. du Plat Taylor and H. Cleere [eds.], *Roman Shipping and Trade: Britain and the Roman Provinces*, CBA Res. Rep. 24, 49-51.
- Peacock, D.P.S. and Williams, D.F. [1986] *Amphorae and the Roman Economy*, London.
- Ponsich, M. [1974] *Implantation Rurale Antique sur le Bas-Guadalquivir*, Vol. I, Madrid.
- Ponsich, M. [1979] *Implantation Rurale Antique sur le Bas-Guadalquivir*, Vol. II, Paris.
- 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 Antiquedad. II Congreso*, Madrid, 263-280.
- Williams, D.F. [forthcoming] 'The amphorae', in P. Bidwell, *Excavations at South Shields*, forthcoming.