SHW 29.12.01

Excavations at Heybridge, Elms Farm, Essex, 1993-5: An Analysis of Some Aspects of the Samian Pottery

by Steven Willis

1. Introduction

Brenda Dickinson's report provides a substantive guide to the samian pottery recovered from the work at Heybridge, Elms Farm (see above), identifying major trends and including a comprehensive catalogue. Her work enables some further aspects of the use and consumption of samian at the site to be considered and compared with wider patterns discernible in Roman Britain.

Samian is, of course, a particularly useful artefact class for the archaeologist given: (i) its standardization of form and fabric, (ii) its sequential typological development, change in decorative detail and stamps, that are well understood and facilitate relatively close dating, and (iii) its wide distribution and reporting which enable comparative analysis. Various studies have demonstrated that samian was particularly valued or prized amongst contemporary communities. Distinctive and unusual in appearance compared to other contemporary pottery types, samian is perceived, by archaeologists, to have been a high status commodity. Certainly across Britain, samian was in the vanguard of imports arriving at indigenous sites in the years following the conquest and circulated in a manner different from other pottery types (cf. Willis 1997a; 1998); some samian assemblages even appear to represent 'diplomatic' gifts (Haselgrove et al. in press). Evans' study of graffiti on Roman pottery (Evans 1987) has shown that samian was much more frequently inscribed with names and marks than other pottery types, with marking evidently expressing a concern to denote ownership. Further, studies of the repair of broken pottery vessels via lead riveting or cleats shows that samian was repaired with disproportionate frequency compared to other types of vessels (Marsh 1981, 227; King and Millett 1993, table 16.5; Evans 1996a, 89; Evans 1996b, 62; Booth 1997, 123). In other words a broken samian vessel was more likely to be repaired than any other type of pot, and this is a widespread pattern, identifiable at all types of site. The large majority of decorated samian vessels were bowls and it seems that these vessels may have been particularly valued, either because they were relatively expensive (reflecting the amount of labour taken to produce them, plus transport costs) or perhaps because the form and finish was attractive as a (? communal) drinking vessel. Overall scrutiny of the incidence of samian seems to confirm that it was, indeed, a status symbol, relating to wealth, social and cultural identity (Willis 1998). Samian, therefore, can be a sensitive indicator of a range of processes to a degree that is not possible with other pottery types of the period. For these reasons it is potentially useful to explore further the character of the samian assemblage recovered at this site, with the advantage of such a large sample of this pottery having been recovered.

Recent studies have shown consistent differences in the pattern of samian occurrence at sites which seems to reflect, strongly, site type: major towns and sites associated with the Roman military show a pattern of more frequent samian use and deposition, while at other sites (small towns, roadside settlements, religious foci and rural sites) samian is much less frequent relative to other pottery types. Variations in the frequency of samian at different types of site appear to have been socially structured: differences in access to quantities of samian may have had an economic basis (ie. it may not have been easily affordable), and / or particular cultural attitudes may have been influential (eg. at some types of site samian may have been considered an important regular mechanism of status display amongst certain social groups, and a symbol of '*Romanitas*' and wealth, while at other sites, people may not have used sets of samian as a regular everyday status symbol, but less often, for specific purposes or events). Comparison of the samian assemblage from Elms Farm with patterns recently identified for other sites in Britain is potentially instructive.

2. Samian as a component of Pottery Groups

2.1 An analysis of the frequency of samian amongst Pottery Groups by phase

In order to establish the nature of samian use and consumption at Heybridge, Elms Farm, several approaches have been adopted. A useful index of the general pattern of samian use and consumption can be established by quantifying its occurrence within a series of phased pottery groups. As noted elsewhere the Key Groups are considered both representative of the pottery being consumed at the site through various phases and are 'good' groups from a methodological point of view (ie. are of some size, contain comparatively modest amounts of residual material, etc.). The data from these groups has been supplemented here using the 'Pool' groups, that is other 'good', representative and stratified groups identified by the pottery team, which are also used elsewhere in the analysis of the pottery assemblage. Combining the quantitative information from these Groups by phase results in unusually large samples which should provide a reliable guide to the overall frequency of samian consumption at the site through time. Data on the occurrence of samian within these Groups is presented in Tables **AA** and **BB**. The data are derived only from groups in which samian sherds are present (which is a function of the data available to this author), and exclude, also, groups which appear to include structured special deposits (cf. below), or, in one or two cases, some intrusive sherds. In effect these criteria omit only a few of the Key and Pool Groups. (Omissions from the Key Groups comprise the following: Ceramic Phase 4: Group 20008, which appears to include a structured element, and the Group from Ditch 9213, which included no samian; Ceramic Phase 7: the Well Group 6280 which also seems to include a structured element, and the kiln stoke-hole Group 1589, which included no samian). That a small number of groups not including any samian have been excluded from the analysis means, of course, that any figures indicating the percentage of samian pottery within phases slightly over-represents the actual frequency of this ware per phase *vis-à-vis* other pottery wares. The Groups are listed individually in Tables **EE** and **FF** below.

Table **AA** shows the frequency of samian amongst pottery groups by phase when EVE is the measure; Table **BB** shows the equivalent data where weight is the measure. Weight proportions are a good measure when the intention is to compare the composition of groups over time, between sites, etc., while EVE is also suitable for this purpose, and gives an impression of vessel turnover (cf. Orton 1989). Orton (1989) has recommended that both these measures be employed where possible. For reasons discussed below one should not anticipate that these two measures will yield like results in terms of percentage figures etc. though they should, significantly, show similar trends. The data reproduced in Tables **AA** and **BB** show that despite the fact that in absolute terms a very large sample of samian was collected during the fieldwork at Elms Farm, this pottery type forms only small or very small proportions amongst the pottery being deposited at the site. The overall quantity of samian recovered is high because the scale of the archaeological work was so extensive. It is noteworthy that although the quantities of samian within these groups are invariably modest, it is rarely absent from groups of size.

Considering, firstly, Table **AA**, a general pattern of low percentages is consistent through time and presumably reflects a comparatively low frequency of use of samian ware. Samian is present in Ceramic Phase 3 but forms only a tiny fraction of the pottery of that phase; this is not surprising since away from Roman military sites and major aggregated centres samian is generally only occasionally found amongst contexts dating to the mid 1st century AD (cf. Willis 1997). The samian percentages for Ceramic Phases 4 and 5 are remarkably similar to each other and imply a continuity in the consumption and deposition of samian through the early Roman period. These data are likely to be a reliable index, given the robustness of the sample (for these are large samples and combine data from six and nine 'good' groups respectively). Samian data from other sites in Britain (eg. Marsh 1981) indicate that

Ceramic Phase and Date Range; Component Groups	Total EVE of Pottery	Total EVE of Samian	Samian as a % of pottery (by EVE) within Ceramic Phase
Ceramic Phase 3 c AD 20-55			
Pool: 11723, 8026, 20030	**11.72**	**0.06**	**0.5%**
Ceramic Phase 4 c AD 55-80			
Key Groups: 9218, 24013; Pool: 4163, 13640, 13717, 17086	**37.02**	**1.25**	**3.4%**
Ceramic Phase 5 c AD 80-125			
Key: 15773, 6201, 5147; Pool: 4136, 4733, 6646, 13771, 17198, 20174	**54.12**	**1.96**	**3.6%**
Ceramic Phase 6 c AD 125-170			
Key: 10159, 7118, 9029; Pool: 4137, 4211, 4536, 10026, 10044, 18697, 20012	**51.33**	**4.24**	**8.3%**
Ceramic Phase 7 c AD 170-210			
Key: 7122; Pool: 4458, 17038	**17.46**	**0.06**	**0.3%**
Ceramic Phase 8 c AD 210-260			
Key: 6182, 16088, 10062; Pool: 4943, 10038	**20.12**	**1.53**	**7.6%**

Table AA: Samian as a component of phased Pottery Groups by EVE (excluding amphora sherds)

there was a peak in the supply and consumption of samian in Britain during the Flavian period (c. AD 70-100). Ceramic Phases 4 and 5 overlap with this peak, and it is possible that any
effects on consumption at Elms Farm during periods when the general supply of samian in Britain were lower, namely during the Neronian period (c. AD 55-70) and the Trajanic-early Hadrianic period (c. AD 100-125), are masked within the generality of the ceramic phasing. Brenda Dickinson notes that the period c. AD 100-120, during the time when the principal source of samian was Les Martres-de-Veyre, was an era of markedly limited samian supply to Britain. Analysis of the samian from specific sites (eg. Southwark) as well as general trends in deposition (cf. Willis 1998, 102-5) indicates that there was probably some careful curation of older samian vessels during this period of low supply. Again, this may be reflected in the consistency of the samian data from Ceramic Phases 4 and 5.

Ceramic Phase and Date Range; Component Groups	Total Weight of Pottery	Total Weight of Samian	Samian as a % of pottery (by weight) within Ceramic Phase

Ceramic Phase 3 **c AD 20-55**			
Pool: 11723, 8026, 20030	**18, 243g**	**58g**	**0.3%**
Ceramic Phase 4 **c AD 55-80**			
Key Groups: 9218, 24013; Pool: 4163, 13640, 13717, 17086	**54, 426g**	**506g**	**0.9%**
Ceramic Phase 5 **c AD 80-125**			
Key: 15773, 6201, 5147; Pool: 4136, 4733, 6646, 13771, 17198, 20174	**82, 320g**	**760g**	**0.9%**
Ceramic Phase 6 **c AD 125-170**			
Key: 10159, 7118, 9029; Pool: 4137, 4211, 4536, 10026, 10044, 18697, 20012	**65, 794g**	**1192g**	**1.8%**
Ceramic Phase 7 **c AD 170-210**			
Key: 7122; Pool: 4458, 17038	**25, 128g**	**294g**	**1.2%**
Ceramic Phase 8 **c AD 210-260**			
Key: 6182, 16088, 10062; Pool: 4943, 10038	**27, 144g**	**522g**	**1.9%**

Table BB: Samian as a component of phased Pottery Groups by weight (excluding amphora sherds)

Moving into the 2nd century, the proportion of samian amongst the sample relating to Ceramic Phase 6 is 8.3%. This represents a doubling of the percentages for Phases 4 and 5, but probably does not reflect a change in cultural practice at the Elms Farm site, but rather may relate to the general increase in samian appearing in Britain from the early Antonine period (from c. AD 140), supplemented in the Essex region by local production of Colchester samian from c. AD 155 (cf. Tyers 1996, 114-6). The frequency of samian dips dramatically, and unexpectedly, in the sample relating to Phase 7. It is likely that this anomaly is due to the sample being less representative than others, for it comprises, regrettably, of data from just three groups, with one group numerically dominant (that from Feature 7122).

The proportion of samian in the sample from Ceramic Phase 8 returns to a similar level as that of Phase 6. The majority of the samian from this first half of the 3rd century phase is Central Gaulish. One might suspect that a proportion of these items are residual from earlier phases, but it is also likely that the normal 'life cycle' of some later Central Gaulish imports meant that many of these vessels were still extant into this period, and, again, curation of fine ware vessels in a period of low samian supply is also highly probable.

When weight is the measure a general similarity in trends is apparent (cf. Table **BB**). Percentages are very low by this measure. This is to be expected since samian is a fine ware and includes a range of comparatively thin-walled and small forms, including cups and dishes: such vessels, when broken, produce comparatively light sherds when compared to other types such as some storage and cooking jars which may break into many sherds that are nonetheless individually comparatively heavy; conversely sherds from fine wares, though

comparatively light and small nonetheless often represent somewhat larger fractions of vessels and this is reflected in EVE measurement which deals with Vessel Equivalents (cf. Orton 1989; Willis 1996). What is particularly archaeologically significant is not that there be correspondence between the results of these measures in terms of actual figures and percentages, but that they show trends in the relative frequency of pottery which assists comparative analysis (cf. Orton 1978).

Considering Table **BB** overall, there is good agreement with Table **AA** in terms of the comparative frequency of samian. The weight data confirm that samian comprises only a tiny fraction of the pottery of Phase 3. The samian percentages for Ceramic Phases 4 and 5 are again consistent suggesting continuity in samian consumption and deposition through the early Roman era. Moving into the 2nd century, the proportion of samian amongst the sample relating to Ceramic Phase 6 is 1.8%. This proportion is very small, though as with the EVE measure this represents a doubling of the percentages for Phases 4 and 5. The frequency of samian dips in the sample relating to Phase 7, as it does when EVE is the measure, though by weight it is less marked than with EVE data; the percentage is higher than in the 1st century groups. Again, the proportion of samian in the sample from Phase 8 returns to a similar level as that of Phase 6, a pattern seen also by EVE.

2.2 Comparison of the Elms Farm data by phase with data for other sites in Roman Britain

It is instructive to compare these data from Elms Farm with data from other sites in Roman Britain. Table **CC** documents the average percentages that samian pottery comprises, by weight, within groups from a variety of site types. This provides an approximate guide to the general frequency of samian at sites (c. AD 40 to 200). (Unfortunately, there are insufficient data yet published nationally to enable a similar table to be generated where EVE is the measure, though see Table **DD**). Work for the English Heritage funded Samian Project (Willis forthcoming) has shown that there is a strong correlation between the status and identity of sites and the proportion of samian present within the groups recovered from such sites. By this measure Elms Farm compares well with the pattern seen at Roman 'small towns', roadside settlements and indeed rural sites.

Considering pottery groups from sites of 'small town' or roadside settlement status several cases of higher frequencies of samian, than at Elms Farm, can be noted. At Braintree, for instance, a site conventionally seen as a small town, samian formed 5.8% of the pottery from well 102 and ditch 307 (group size: 4.4kg) at College Road, dated c. AD 150-250 (Martin 2000a). At Meole Brace, Shropshire, samian accounted for an unusually high 7.5% of the pottery from Phase 3 (group size: 15.4kg), c. AD 210/220-230 (Ellis et al. 1994). Similar percentages occur amongst groups from the roadside settlements, for example: in the case of a series of groups at Neatham, Hampshire (Millett and Graham 1986; Willis 1998, table 1), at Pomeroy Wood, east Devon, where samian forms 2.9% of the pottery from Phase 4i (47.4kg), dated c. AD 90/100-260 (Fitzpatrick *et al*. 1999), and, in Oxfordshire, at Wantage, Mill St, where samian accounted for 2.2% of the 8.4kg of pottery from Phase 1, dated to c. AD 70-160 (Holbrook and Thomas 1996). In Essex a samian percentage of 1.1% is recorded from a pit at Great Dunmow (feature 857) for the period c. AD 190-230/240 (Going and Ford 1988; Willis 1998, Table 1) consistent with contemporary levels at Elms Farm. Two samples from

Site Type	Number of Stratified Phase Groups in Sample	Average % of Samian within Stratified Groups
Military Sites	8	**9.1%**

Major Civil Sites	17	**8.2%**
Small Towns and Roadside Settlements, etc.	14	**2.5%**
Religious / Ritual Sites	6	**1.8%**
Rural Sites	22	**1.3%**

Table CC: Average samian percentages within Pottery Groups from different site types by weight (excluding amphora sherds). Source: English Heritage funded Samian Project Database, summer 2001 (cf. Willis 1998, table 1; Willis forthcoming)

Coggeshall show marked variation, though this evidently relates to the context of these finds. A lower percentage than at contemporary deposits at Elms Farm is recorded from the St Peter's School site, where samian formed a mere 0.02% of the pottery from Phase 4.1 (16.1kg) dated to c. AD 65-150. This probably reflects the likelihood that this fieldwork was located away from the settlement nucleus (Clarke 1988). Conversely at The Lawns, a sample dated to c. AD 140-200 (Phase 4.2) had a relatively high percentage for samian of 6.4% (Martin 1995); in this case this may be a function of the small size of the sample (1.6kg) but, moreover, the sample appears to be associated with a building of some importance (cf. Isserlin 1995).

Some comparative data for rural sites in the region are available. At Buildings Farm, just west of Great Dunmow a group of c. 12.2kg of pottery dating to c. AD 35-100 included samian, though this constituted just 0.6% of the group (Wallace 1997). Amongst a similarly sized group from the Old House site Church Langley, dating to c. AD 120-165 samian accounted for 1.2% of the pottery (Martin 2000b). At both sites the proportion formed by samian is lower than in the contemporary phases at Elms Farm, albeit marginally so. In sum, comparison with data from other sites demonstrates that the proportions of samian within phased groups at Elms Farm are in broad accordance with proportions at other smaller nucleated centres. Elms Farm has somewhat higher relative frequencies of samian than occur at a range of rural sites, though the difference from proportions at rural sites is essentially marginal.

Site Group and Date	Date Range of Group	Samian as a % of the Pottery Group (by EVE)
Early to Mid 1st Century AD Group		
Elms Farm, Ceramic Phase 3	c AD 20-55	**0.5**
Neronian to Early Flavian Groups		
Elms Farm, Ceramic Phase 4	c AD 55-80	**3.4**
Chelmsford, Site K, ditch 205 Site type: Area of temple, etc	c AD 60-75/85	**2.4**
Chelmsford, SE sector, Ceramic Phase 1 Site type: Roman military - fort	c AD 60-80	**1.4**
Flavian to Early Hadrianic Groups		
Chelmsford, SE sector, Ceramic Phase 2 Site type: Area of Small Town	c AD 80-120/125	**6.4**
Elms Farm, Ceramic Phase 5	c AD 80-125	**3.6**
Hadrianic to Mid Antonine Groups		
Church Langley, Old House Site type: Rural	c AD 120-165	**7.5**

Chelmsford, SE sector, Ceramic Phase 3 Site type: Area of Small Town	c AD 120/125-160/175	**4.7**
Elms Farm, Ceramic Phase 6	c AD 125-170	**8.3**
Chelmsford, Site K, pit K90.2 Site type: Area of temple, etc	c AD 125/130-160/175	**5.7**
Later Antonine to Early 3rd Century Groups		
Chelmsford, SE sector, Ceramic Phase 4 Site type: Area of Small Town, inc. mansio	c AD 160/175-200/210	**9.6**
Elms Farm, Ceramic Phase 7	c AD 170-210	**0.3**
Great Dunmow, gravel pit 857 Site type: Area of Small Town	c AD 190-230/240	**1.7**
Rivenhall, Period 3A Site type: Villa complex	c AD 190-230/240	**8.2**
Early to Mid 3rd Century Groups		
Chelmsford, SE sector, Ceramic Phase 5 Site type: Area of Small Town	c AD 200/210-250/260	**8.3**
Elms Farm, Ceramic Phase 8	c AD 210-260	**7.6**

Table DD: The relative frequency of samian within Pottery Groups from various sites in Essex by EVE (excluding amphora sherds). Sources: Chelmsford, Site K (Wickenden 1992), Chelmsford, SE sector (Going 1987), Church Langley (Martin 2000b), Great Dunmow (Wickenden 1988), Rivenhall (Rodwell and Rodwell 1993)

Data by EVE are available for various sites in Essex (thanks to a history of pursuit of the method by pottery specialists working in the county); this information, with regard to samian, is reproduced in Table **DD**. It can be seen, by this method (cf. Table **DD**), that samian is generally rare in the early post-conquest period, but clearly becomes more frequent in the 2nd century. In other words its frequency over time at Elms Farm reflects a broader pattern in the county. That the data relating to Ceramic Phase 7 at Elms Farm (later Antonine to early 3rd century) are anomalous is again emphasized when set against the samples from Rivenhall and Chelmsford. It is noteworthy that both the early to mid 3rd century groups listed have similar proportions of samian to mid to late 2nd century groups, emphasizing that samian was apparently still being used to a significant degree into the 3rd century, a period when imports of new samian were more limited than previously.

2.3 Samian within individual Groups at Elms Farm

In sections 2.1 and 2.2 the data for the individual stratified groups were summed by phase to generate robust figures for comparative analysis. Some attention to the frequency of samian within the individual Key and Pool Groups is instructive. Again this is via EVE and weight. This analysis demonstrates the previously identified tendency for EVE data to produce vacillating results when sample size is small or moderate (eg. Orton 1982). This is so because the presence of a single rim sherd of a certain type within a group with a modest overall EVE size can have a significant impact on the percentage figures (cf. below). Hence weight data are a more reliable indicator in this instance. The data by EVE are presented here as a matter of record and for methodological interest.

Table **EE** lists the proportion of samian within each Key and Pool Group, in which samian rims occur, by EVE (Pool Groups with intrusive material are excluded); two groups including likely structured deposits are included here. There are six groups of Neronian-early Flavian date (Ceramic Phase 4). Excluding the Pit 20008 which includes a likely structured deposit, the proportions of these groups formed by samian range from 1.7% to 15.9% and none is particularly near the mean for this phase of 3.4%. The groups with the lowest proportions of samian are the markedly larger groups, and the three comparatively high proportions are associated with quite small groups (cf. above). Seven groups of Ceramic Phase 5 are represented, covering the period c. AD 80-125. As with Ceramic Phase 4 the data show a wide range of proportions of samian within these groups. Samian forms a

conspicuously high 23% of the sample from Ditch 6646, though this is clearly an effect of a small EVE sample size (compare the percentage when weight is the measure: Table **FF**). Conversely samian forms only 0.5% of the large group from Pit 13771, but this reflects an absolute paucity of samian from this feature.

There are ten Hadrianic to mid Antonine groups (Ceramic Phase 6) and these show marginally less variation than with the preceding samples. Eight of the ten groups have samian proportions of c. 6% or more. The highest proportion is 33% amongst the smallish sample from Pit 4211. There are only two groups available for the period c. AD 170-210, neither of which is likely to be representative of normal levels of samian consumption at the site at this time. Indeed, the group from Well 6280, wherein samian forms c. 22% of the pottery by EVE is evidently a structured deposit with several complete or near complete vessels. The three Groups of early to mid 3rd century date (Ceramic Phase 8) are all near to the mean for that phase.

Table **FF** lists the equivalent data to Table **EE**, when weight is the measure. Of the mid-1st to early 2nd century groups (Ceramic Phases 4 and 5) most groups have proportions of samian similar to or a little below the mean for the phase, verifying the validity of this mean (cf. Table **BB**) as an indicator. (This contrasts with the EVE results of Table **EE** which are affected by skewing due to the small EVE totals of some groups). The highest proportions occur in Ditch 17086 and Pit 20174 but amount only, in both cases, to just over 3% of the group. The overall picture is consistent and emphatic: very small proportions characterize all fifteen groups. Turning to the ten Hadrianic to mid Antonine groups (Ceramic Phase 6), more variation occurs. Pit 10044 has a very low proportion of samian as only one samian sherd is present. The highest proportion is 6.7% amongst the smallish sample from Pit 4211. Seven of the ten groups have samian proportions under 3%. The highest proportions are 3.9% amongst the sample from Pit 7118, which yielded a range of samian items, and 4.4% and 6.7% from comparatively small sized pit groups in Area K.

Group and Location	Date of Group	Sample Size	% of Samian in Group by EVE
Pit 9218, fills 9217, 9370. Area D	c AD 55-80	13.89	**1.7**
Pit 13640, fill 13681. Area I (Pool)	c AD 55-80	7.93	**2.5**
Pit 4163, fill 4164. Area K (Pool)	c AD 55-80	1.26	**11.9**
Pit 20008, fill 20009. Area L (1)	c AD 55-80	12.48	**1.1**
Ditch 17086, fill 17087. Area Q (Pool)	c AD 55-80	1.70	**15.9**
Pit 24013, fill 24014. Area M (2)	c AD 70-80	3.01	**12.9**
Pit 4733, fills 4725, 4758, 4823, 4872, 4976 Area K (Pool)	c AD 80-100	7.10	**8.3**
Ditch 6646, fill 6647. Area H (Pool)	c AD 80-125	1.62	**22.8**
Pit 13771, fill 13825. Area I (Pool)	c AD 80-125	11.38	**0.5**
Pit 5147, fill 5146. Area J	c AD 80-125	14.36	**4.6**
Pit 4136, fill 4138. Area K (Pool)	c AD 80-125	5.95	**1.0**
Pit 20174, fill 20180. Area L (Pool)	c AD 80-125	1.91	**3.4**
Ditch 17198, fill 17189. Area Q (Pool) (3)	c AD 80-125	5.34	**1.1**
Pit 10026, fill 10054. Area E (Pool)	c AD 125-170	1.40	**5.7**
Pit 10044, fill 10024. Area E (Pool) (5)	c AD 125-170	1.95	**3.1**
Ditch 10159, fill 10182. Area F (4)	c AD 125-170	19.83	**4.1**
Pit 7118, fills 7119, 7166. Area G (5)	c AD 125-170	5.95	**14.1**
"Trench" 18697, fill 13813. Area I (Pool)	c AD 125-170	4.26	**6.6**
Pit 4137, fill 4152. Area K (Pool)	c AD 125-170	1.48	**18.9**
Pit 4211, fill 4212. Area K (Pool)	c AD 125-170	1.94	**33.0**
Pit 4536, fill 4537. Area K (Pool)	c AD 125-170	1.82	**12.1**
Pit 20012, fill 20013. Area L (Pool)	c AD 125-170	4.95	**6.0**
Pit 9029, fills 9028, 9064. Area D (5)	c AD 140-170	7.75	**9.3**

Pit 7122, fill 7123. Area G (5)	c AD 170-210	8.65	**0.7**
Well 6280, fill 16083. Area H (1)	c AD 180-210	4.81	**21.6**
Pit 6182, fill 6178. Area H (6)	c AD 210-235	2.88	**5.2**
Pit 16088, fill 16073. Area H.	c AD 210-250	6.87	**10.6**
Pit 4943, fill 4925. Area K. (Pool) (6)	c AD 210-260	7.72	**8.4**

Table EE: Samian as a component of specific Pottery Groups by EVE (excluding amphora sherds; 'Pool' Groups are specified; all other groups are Key Groups)
(1) Pottery thought to include a structured deposit; (2) This small group includes only two sherds of samian; (3) This group includes only one sherd of samian; (4) Includes several South Gaulish samian sherds - may or may not be residual, given a start date of c. AD 125; (5) Colchester samian present: 10024, three sherds of Colchester samian; 7119/7166, six sherds; 9028/9064, five sherds; 7123, one sherd; (6) Group includes several Central Gaulish samian sherds - may or may not be residual, given a start date of c. AD 210

Group and Location	Date of Group	Sample Size	% of Samian in Group by Weight
Ditch 9213, fill 9214. Area D	c AD 55-80	6.4kg	**0.0**
Pit 9218, fills 9217, 9370. Area D	c AD 55-80	21.1kg	**1.5**
Pit 13640, fill 13681. Area I (Pool)	c AD 55-80	12.9kg	**0.4**
Pit 13717, fill 13692. Area I (Pool)	c AD 55-80	13.8kg	**0.1**
Pit 4163, fill 4164. Area K (Pool)	c AD 55-80	1.6kg	**0.4**
Pit 20008, fill 20009. Area L (1)	c AD 55-80	10.6kg	**0.1**
Ditch 17086, fill 17087. Area Q (Pool)	c AD 55-80	2.9kg	**3.2**
Pit 24013, fill 24014. Area M (2)	c AD 70-80	2.2kg	**0.6**
Pit 4733, fills 4725, 4758, 4823, 4872, 4976. Area K (Pool)	c AD 80-100	8.4kg	**1.0**
Pit 15773, fill 24258. Area M (3)	c AD 80-100	2.1kg	**0.5**
Pit 6201, fill 6203. Area H	c AD 80-125	5.2kg	**1.6**
Ditch 6646, fill 6647. Area H (Pool)	c AD 80-125	5.5kg	**0.9**
Pit 13771, fill 13825. Area I (Pool)	c AD 80-125	21.0kg	**0.2**
Pit 5147, fill 5146. Area J	c AD 80-125	12.5kg	**2.4**
Pit 4136, fill 4138. Area K (Pool)	c AD 80-125	13.3kg	**0.4**
Pit 20174, fill 20180. Area L (Pool)	c AD 80-125	3.5kg	**3.4**
Ditch 17198, fill 17189. Area Q (Pool) (3)	c AD 80-125	10.8kg	**0.03**
Pit 10026, fill 10054. Area E (Pool)	c AD 125-170	1.2kg	**2.0**
Pit 10044, fill 10024. Area E (Pool) (5)	c AD 125-170	2.3kg	**1.0**
Ditch 10159, fill 10182. Area F (4)	c AD 125-170	21.3kg	**1.4**
Pit 7118, fills 7119, 7166. Area G (5)	c AD 125-170	5.8kg	**3.9**
"Trench" 18697, fill 13813. Area I (Pool)	c AD 125-170	5.3kg	**2.2**
Pit 4137, fill 4152. Area K (Pool)	c AD 125-170	1.3kg	**4.4**
Pit 4211, fill 4212. Area K (Pool)	c AD 125-170	1.7kg	**6.7**
Pit 4536, fill 4537. Area K (Pool)	c AD 125-170	1.7kg	**1.3**
Pit 20012, fill 20013. Area L (Pool)	c AD 125-170	6.1kg	**1.6**
Pit 9029, fills 9028, 9064. Area D (5)	c AD 140-170	19.0kg	**1.1**
Pit 7122, fill 7123. Area G (5)	c AD 170-210	15.3kg	**0.2**
Pit 4458, fills 4459, 4460, 4461. Area K (Pool)	c AD 170-210	3.2kg	**1.7**
Pit 17038, fill 17037. Area Q (Pool)	c AD 170-210	6.6kg	**3.2**
Well 6280, fill 16083. Area H (1)	c AD 180-210	4.9kg	**15.5**
Pit 6182, fill 6178. Area H (6)	c AD 210-235	2.4kg	**4.4**
Pit 16088, fill 16073. Area H	c AD 210-250	8.3kg	**2.6**
Pit 10062, fill 10061. Area E	c AD 210-260	1.7kg	**1.0**
Pit 4943, fill 4925. Area K. (Pool) (7)	c AD 210-260	11.3kg	**1.5**

Table FF: Samian as a component of specific Pottery Groups by weight (excluding amphora sherds; 'Pool' Groups are specified; all other groups are Key Groups)
(1) Pottery thought to include a structured deposit; (2) This small group includes only two sherds of samian; (3) This small group includes only one sherd of samian; (4) Includes several South Gaulish samian sherds - may or may not be residual, given a start date of c. AD 125; (5) Colchester samian present: 10024, three sherds; 7119/7166, six sherds; 9028/9064, five sherds; 7123, one sherd; (6) This group includes a range of fine wares in small proportions; (7) Of fourteen samian sherds, thirteen are Central Gaulish

Four groups are available for the period c. AD 170-210. These include the sample from Well 6280, wherein samian forms 15% of an evidently structured deposit. The remaining three groups, as with the four groups available for Ceramic Phase 8, c. AD 210-260, all have low proportions of samian, though with some degree of variance from their respective means (cf. Table **BB**).

3. Spatial distribution of the samian

In her report Brenda Dickinson documents the proportion of all the samian recovered in each Area of the site. This information is of intrinsic interest, but needs to be calibrated in order to overcome biases arising from such variables as differential levels of archaeological input. Only then can one establish whether there are actual patterns in the distribution of the remains. In order to achieve such calibration one can examine the proportions of samian within groups from different areas of the site.

The thirty-five Key and Pool Groups listed in Table **FF** come from various locations across the site. In principle plotting the spatial incidence of these groups by site Area (and chronological phase) might be thought useful, carrying the prospect of identifying areas of above and below average frequency of samian and other patterning, that might be significant. Some other recent studies have plotted the proportions of samian occurring across sites in order to isolate trends with regard to different functional and status areas, as at London (Milne and Wardle 1993) and Lincoln (Darling 1998). In the event little patterning is discernible from this Elms Farm data. Both a larger number of samples, and a more even spread of samples spatially and chronologically would be desirable in order to elucidate the presence of any spatial trends. For only three areas are more than three samples available, namely Areas H, I and K, with the latter being the source of nine samples. The majority of the Groups are located in the vicinity of the temple / core area at the western end of the examined area.

A few observations may be significant. Area K, with the largest number of sample groups includes both the group with the highest proportion of samian (excluding the structured deposit, feature 6280 of Area H) and the group with the lowest proportion of samian. This may simply be a function of the fact that this Area has the largest number of samples. Virtually all Areas with two or more sample groups include groups with both comparatively high and comparatively low percentages of samian (ie. Areas D, E, G, H, I, K and L). An exception is Area Q, where two samples available have relatively high proportions of samian, both at 3.2% by weight.

Finally, it is worth noting that sherds from a samian inkwell (Ritterling 13) were recovered from Area K (Pit 4211, fill 4212). This form is functionally specific and is unlikely to have been distributed in the same manner as the other samian forms. Samian inkwells are very rare site finds, and are almost invariably associated with Roman military sites and major civil centres where they occur at or near fora and other sites of business and record keeping (Willis forthcoming). In other words their distribution is highly structured. Unlike writing tablets and styli which were principally to do with the recording of information over the short term in a relatively cheap format, the presence of an inkwell implies the documentation of information for keeping over the long term (or long transit) and an investment of some wealth, due to the relative expense of ink and the receiving medium which will have been vellum or papyrus. The vessel is in South Gaulish fabric and was recovered from a Ceramic

Phase 6 context, so it was either residual or (not surprisingly) had had a long life. The association of this find with Area K is consistent with the possibility, suggested by other forms of evidence, that a better quality building/s existed here, by the western margin of the excavated area (pers. comm. Mark Atkinson).

The scale of the fieldwork undertaken at this site means that there is much potential for further examining the spatial distribution of different pottery types, via follow-up and subsequent studies using the site archive; samian will be one of the categories most likely to prove informative.

4. Analysis of the proportions of decorated samian ware

Table **GG** records the proportions of decorated samian present by source, based on the number of vessels represented. These data have a chronological dimension in so far as the sources of samian at Elms Farm are sequential. The table uses data for the whole recovered assemblage as identified by Brenda Dickinson and provides a potentially useful guide to the consumption of decorated ware (mainly bowls, but including some beakers and other closed forms), as opposed to plain samian forms (largely cups, platters and dishes). Ideally, data of this type (or indeed EVE data) should be from stratified phased samples, but this information was not available and the present data suffice as a general index.

Assessing levels of decorated forms present amongst samian assemblages is a useful undertaking since it has been demonstrated that systematic differences in proportions occur at different types of site (Willis 1997a; 1998). Decorated samian vessels, such as f29, f30 and f37, are often thought to have been comparatively valued items because of their unusual character and since they will have been more expensive to produce and transport than plain forms. It may be that these vessels were prized not because they were decorated, but because they were bowls and potentially drinking vessels (Willis 1997b). If decorated vessels were valued more than other vessels the incidence of such items may be an index of site status and identity. Alongside Table **GG** relating to Elms Farm, it is possible to present, via Table **HH**, some comparative data for other sites in Britain. Table **HH** is a 'short-hand' summary of more detailed information published elsewhere by individual site and stratified phase group (Willis 1998, Table 3). Table **HH**, like Table **CC**, shows that there were clear differences in the character of samian consumption at different types of site. Amongst the fifteen samples from major civil centres in Britain, for instance, only one sample has a percentage for decorated ware below 20%. However, amongst sites lower down the settlement hierarchy, including small towns, roadside settlements, smaller nucleated centres and rural sites, proportions of decorated ware are very often below 20%. This is the case at Neatham, Hampshire, where decorated forms account for only 14.3% of the assemblage covering the period c. AD 150-235 (Millett and Graham 1986), and at Towcester, Alchester Road, (Phase 2, c. AD 170-270) where the equivalent figure is 13.2% (Brown and Woodfield 1983). At Building AJ by the 'small town' at Kenchester, Herefordshire, decorated ware formed 20.7% of the samian from Period 2c (c. AD 140/150-180/200), though the building was of some pretension (Wilmott and Rahtz 1985). These systematic variations between different types of site raise questions regarding samian form and function, and of variations in the perception and use of samian vessels at different types of sites.

Comparison between Tables **GG** and **HH** suggests that Elms Farm compares closely to the 'norm' for the small town, roadside settlement and smaller nucleated centres. Decorated vessels form just under 20% of the South Gaulish samian at the site during the mid and later 1st century AD. The proportion with regard to Les Martres samian is higher, probably since the industry seems to have produced disproportionately more decorated bowls than did the other industries, and because there may have been an unusual 'delivery' of Cettus bowls from this source (cf. Brenda Dickinson's report). The proportion of decorated vessels falls somewhat amongst the mid to later 2nd century material from Lezoux, with the proportion at c. 16%. Significantly, a similar pattern has been noted elsewhere: as at

Source and Date	Number of Samian Vessels Identifiable to Form / Generic Form (Decorated in brackets)	Percentage formed by Decorated Vessels
South Gaulish, La Graufesenque c. AD 40-110	**892** (174)	**19.5%**
Central Gaulish, Les Martres-de-Veyre c. AD 100-160 (mainly 100-130)	**204** (48)	**23.5%**
Central Gaulish, Lezoux c. AD 120-200	**2392** (378)	**15.8%**
East Gaulish, All Sources c. AD 130-260	**501** (86)	**17.2%**
Colchester c. AD 155-180	**92** (5)	**5.4%**

Table GG: Percentage of decorated samian vessels at Elms Farm by source and date
(Data: Brenda Dickinson's report, by number of vessels represented)

Catterick, North Yorkshire (pers. comm. Jeremy Evans), and at Lincoln and Verulamium, *insula* XIV, where Darling (1998) has identified a general decline in the proportion of decorated sherds present in the 2nd century. The percentage for East Gaulish samian is not dissimilar from that of the Lezoux ware at 17.2%.

Quite strikingly only five out of a maximum number of 101 vessels of Colchester samian recovered were decorated forms (Table **GG**). As Brenda Dickinson states, the paucity of other collections of Colchester samian of any size make assessment of the finds from Elms Farm difficult. It is unclear whether this low proportion is a function of perhaps relatively less decorated forms being manufactured by the Colchester industry (cf. Bird 1999, 76), the status of the Elms Farm site, or the preferences of its consumers and their perception/definition of Colchester samian. In other words was there simply little decorated Colchester samian available, or were the consumers at Elms Farm using Colchester plain samian ware but preferring their decorated bowls to be from the technically more accomplished Central Gaulish industry?

On the whole the picture that emerges from Table **GG** is one of broad consistency in the levels of decorated ware through time. Variance occurs only with the less important sources of supply (Colchester and Les Martres) and in these instances may relate more to the output of those industries rather than be specific to Elms Farm. Significantly, when the numbers of vessels from all sources are aggregated the percentage formed by decorated vessels is 16.9%, a proportion which is very close to the mean for six samples from other sites of middle rank scale and probable like functions (cf. Table **HH**; these sites include Baldock

Site Type	Number of Site Assemblage Groups in Sample	Average % of Samian that is Decorated
Military Sites	11	**26.7%**
Major Civil Sites	16	**26.6%**
Small Towns and Roadside Settlements, etc.	6	**17.9%**
Rural Sites	10	**17.2%**

Table HH: Average percentages of decorated vessels amongst stratified samian assemblages (1st and 2nd centuries AD) from different site types. (Source: Willis 1998 (with additions), by number of vessels represented)

(excluding structured deposits), Castor (Water Newton/*Durobrivae)*, Kenchester, Neatham and Towcester). Discounting the Colchester samian results in a similar percentage of 17.2%.

5. Summary

Overall, a picture emerges of a familiarity with samian amongst the people living at the site, or whose lives related to the site, but samian was not commonplace at this site. Samian was evidently supplementary to the ceramic repertoire at Elms Farm, though seems to have been invested with particular significance by its users. Some vessels may have been in everyday use, others (perhaps the majority of vessels) may have been saved for special days and events. As elsewhere in Roman Britain there was clearly no social restriction upon access to samian. Elms Farm, however, was almost certainly, *vis-à-vis* continental samian, at the end of a long chain of exchange, and evidently did not exert a particular 'pull' in acquiring samian. Indeed it was probably at the tail of 'down the line exchange'. Nonetheless it is significant to note that the frequency of samian at Chelmsford is hardly higher than at Elms Farm, despite the fact that Chelmsford was almost certainly the main market centre for central Essex at this time.

As Table **CC** indicates, high proportions of samian occur at military sites and sites at the apex of the settlement hierarchy: in short 'high' levels of samian consumption are associated with sites closely articulated with the inter-provincial/Imperial economic system, with users familiar with metropolitan Roman material culture, and centres of higher status. The pattern of samian evidence from Elms Farm shows a comparatively low level frequency of consumption, but one that is normal for a smaller nucleated settlement site. In so far as samian was an indicator of social status this seems to have been a particularly urban phenomenon; relatively low levels of samian *per se*, and of decorated vessels, at small towns, roadside settlements and smaller nucleated centres like Elms Farm suggest there was 'less status' - or rather less individuals with wealth and status - at such sites, and / or that status within such milieux was not commonly displayed by means of the ownership of samian.

On the other hand the selection of samian vessels for inclusion with burials (in Area R, cf. above) and structured special deposits at the site, where it often occurs with a frequency at variance to its representation in normal site deposits (eg. Tables **EE** and **FF**, Well 6280), indicates that here, as elsewhere in the Roman province, it was regarded somewhat differently from other ceramics.

In sum, the occupants of the Elms Farm site had an awareness of samian, which was available to users at the site throughout the importing period (c. AD 20-260). Its prominence

in the everyday use of ceramics was probably moderate, and, besides, it was not necessarily in common daily use. There is clear evidence that it was regarded differently from other contemporary pottery types. Overall, the patterns of samian consumption at Elms Farm defined through these analyses accord with trends identified at other smaller nucleated sites of the period.

Acknowledgements
Steven Willis wishes to gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Mark Atkinson, Ed Biddulph, Joyce Compton and Scott Martin in preparing his discussion of the samian evidence from the site.

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