

Amphoras and the origins of the Brockley Hill Roman pottery industry

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Brockley Hill, Field 410, Site B

IN A PAPER in *London Archaeologist* for Spring 1973, Stephen Castle published a group of pottery recovered during the previous year's excavations in Field 410 at Brockley Hill¹. The material was from a charcoal- and ash-filled pit; the illustrated vessels include a large number of collared flagons, a range of bowls, jars, a tazza and several mortarium fragments. External dating for the group is provided by an imitation *as* of Claudius and a sherd of a South Gaulish samian bowl, Dragendorff form 30, of Claudian or early Neronian date.

Since its publication, this group has been widely recognised as representing an early phase of pottery production at Brockley Hill², and as such it provides an opportunity to examine the beginnings of pottery production on the site, and the wider origins of the Verulamium-region pottery industry. The material preserved at the Museum of London includes items not mentioned in the original report, and also highlights other aspects of the assemblage that deserve amplification.

In addition to those vessels illustrated in the original report³, the pit group includes the items illustrated in Fig. 1: the numbering follows on from the original sequence, and all vessels are in the standard Verulamium-region white- or buff-fired ware, except where noted:

- 48 Rim sherd of Dressel 2-4 amphora. No part of the handle remains but there is a large handle scar covering most of the sherd.
- 49 Rim sherd of another similar vessel.
- 50 Flagon with thick rounded rim.

- 51 Jar with groove on neck and groove on inner lip. White with darker blue-grey surfaces.
- 52-53 Jars with thick, rectangular profile, perhaps from a 'honey pot'.
- 54-59 Necked jars with rounded or thickened lips. 55-57 and 59 are white with darker grey surfaces.
- 60 Ovoid jar.
- 61-65 Lids 64-5 are white with darker grey or blue-grey surfaces.
- 66-69 Bowls with moulded or 'reeded' rims. 66 has a groove on the edge of the sherd, perhaps marking a carination in the profile. 66-7 and 69 are white with grey surfaces.
- 70 Flanged bowl.
- 71-73 Plain dishes with flat bases. No. 72 is reconstructed from parts of two vessels.
- 74 A crudely formed, roughly cylindrical handle, probably a loop handle from an open bowl. One face of the sherd is smooth where it has become detached from the wall of the vessel.

The Dressel 2-4 amphoras

The most interesting of the additional vessels in the pit are the amphoras. The production of Dressel 2-4 amphoras at Brockley Hill has been previously demonstrated by the discovery of at least twenty-five vessels dumped in a ditch which was excavated in 1975 on the opposite side of Watling Street to the Field 410 pit⁴. These included one specimen stamped by *Dares*, a potter whose rare stamps are also recorded on a handful of mortaria. This, and other internal dating evidence, suggested that the 1975 group of amphoras should be dated to the

1. S. A. Castle 'Trial Excavations in field 410 Brockley Hill Part I' *London Archaeol* 2 no. 2 (1973) 36-9. The material is currently held in the Museum of London (Accession number 73.194). The main pit group is marked Site B, Trench 2, Pit.

2. G. D. Marsh and P. A. Tyers 'The Roman Pottery from Southwark' in *Southwark Excavations 1972-74* (eds.) J. Bird, A. H. Graham, H. L. Sheldon and P. Townend, London Middlesex Archaeol Soc and Surrey Archaeol Soc Joint Publication 1 (1978); V. G. Swan *The pottery kilns of Roman Britain* Royal Commission on Historical Monuments: Supplementary Se-

ries 5, HMSO (1984) 97, fiche 479.2; F. Seeley and C. Thorogood 'Back to Brockley Hill' *London Archaeol* 7 no. 9 (1994) 223.

3. Castle *op cit* fn 1, Fig. 2, 1-47.

4. S. A. Castle 'Amphorae from Brockley Hill, 1975' *Britannia* 9 (1978) 383-92; V. G. Swan *The pottery kilns of Roman Britain* Royal Commission on Historical Monuments: Supplementary Series 5, HMSO (1984) fiche 475.2; R. P. Symonds 'Amphores Romano-Britanniques' in *Actes du Congrès de Versailles, 20-23 mai 1993. Société Française d'Étude de la Céramique Antique en Gaul* ed. L. Rivet, SFECAG, Marseille (1993) 281.

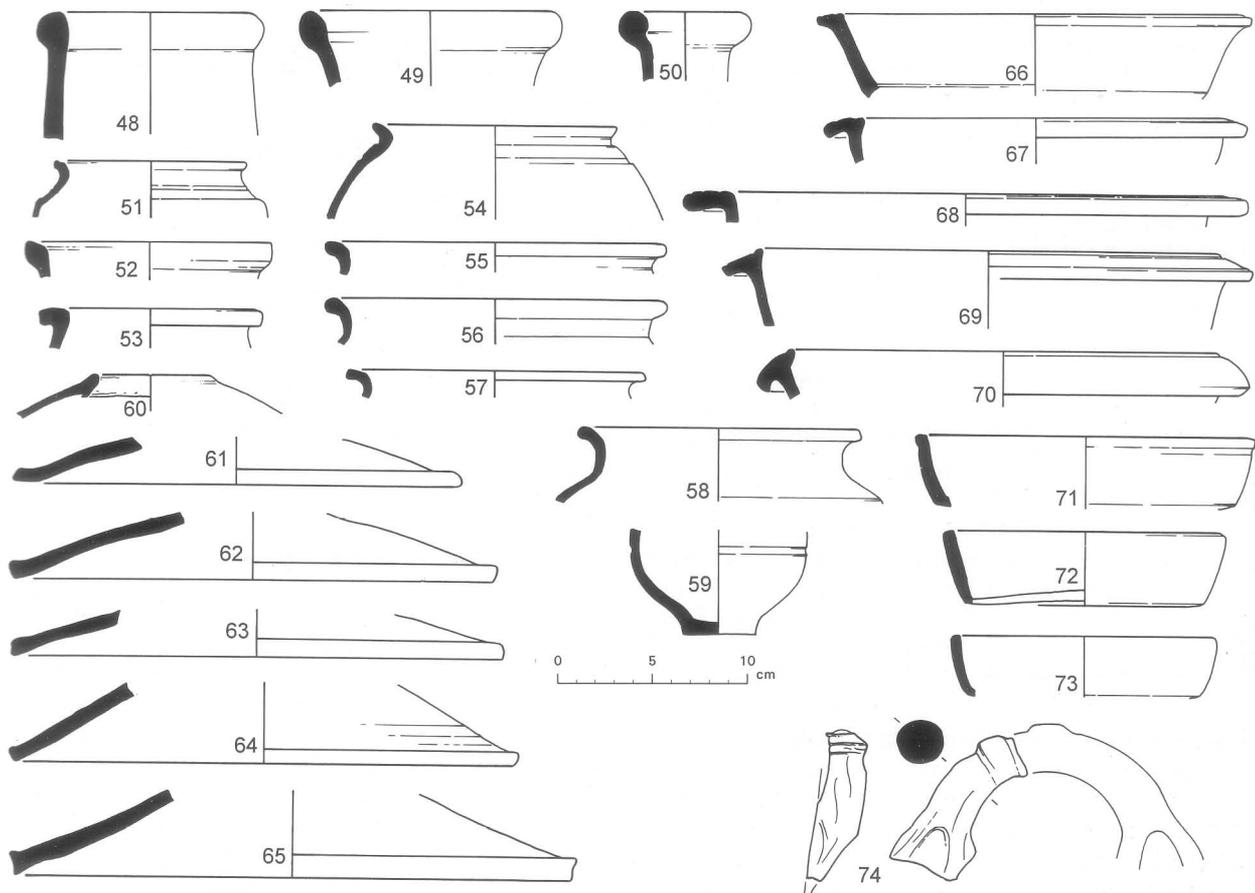


Fig. 1: Brockley Hill, Field 410, Site B, Pit

Flavian or Flavian-Trajanic period. The wider significance of the Brockley Hill amphoras is discussed by Sealey⁵ who reports that there are several specimens of Brockley Hill amphora from Lion Walk, Colchester. These are not yet published but are apparently from a pre-Flavian context⁶ and thus somewhat earlier than the apparent date of the *Dares* amphoras from Brockley Hill. London, perhaps the more obvious market, has yet to yield any examples, although they are perhaps to be expected. The amphoras from the Field 410 pit resolve the chronological conundrums and dem-

onstrate the production of Dressel 2-4 amphoras at Brockley Hill during the pre-Flavian period.

The Dressel 2-4 was one of the most widespread of early Imperial wine amphoras. Although ultimately derived from a Greek prototype, the form was produced widely during the 1st century AD in Italy, southern France and Spain. It is now also clear that manufacturing of the type extended further north into Gaul, beyond the southern province of Gallia Narbonensis⁷. It is attested at Augst (near Basel, Switzerland), Lyon, Sens (Burgundy), Mou-

5. P. R. Sealey *Amphoras from the 1970 excavations at Colchester Sheepen* Brit Archaeol Reps Brit Ser 142 (1985) 128-30.

6. B. Davies, B. Richardson and R. Tomber *A dated corpus of early Roman pottery from the City of London* (*The archaeology of Roman London*, 5) Council for British Archaeology Res Rep 98, Museum of London and Council for British Archaeology (1994) 41.

7. F. Laubenheimer 'Les amphores gauloises sous l'Empire. Recherches nouvelles sur leur production et leur chronologie' in *Amphores romaines et histoire économique: dix ans de recherche* Collection de l'École Française de Rome, 114, École Française de Rome, Rome (1989) 119-23; S. Martin-Kilcher *Die römischen Amphoren aus Augst und Kaiseraugst. Ein Beitrag zur römischen Handels- und Kulturgeschichte*. 2,

Die Amphoren für Wein, Fischsauce, Südfrüchte (Gruppen 2-24) und Gesamtauswertung Forschungen in Augst 7, Römermuseum, Augst (1994) 342-4; A. Desbat (ed) 'Les productions des ateliers de potiers antiques de Lyon. 2e partie: Les ateliers du Ier s. après J.-C.' *Gallia* 54 (1997) 1-117; F. Olmer 'Les productions d'amphores en Bourgogne au Haut-Empire: un point sur les éléments typologiques, la culture de la vigne et la production du vin' in *Actes du Congrès de Dijon. 16-19 mai 1996. Société Française d'Étude de la Céramique Antique en Gaule* ed. L. Rivet, SFECCAG, Marseille (1996) 73-80; F. Berthault 'Production d'amphores vinaires dans la région du Langon (Vendée)' in *Actes du Congrès du Mans. 8-11 mai 1997. Société Française d'Étude de la Céramique Antique en Gaule* ed. L. Rivet, SFECCAG, Marseille (1997) 209-216.

gon (in the Loire valley), Langon (in the Vendee, near the Atlantic coast), and doubtless further production sites remain to be identified. In detail, the Brockley Hill amphoras share certain features with the products of the 'provincial' producers of Gaul. The handles of the amphoras in the *Dares* group are drawn from a single piece of clay with a deep groove on the outer face (the 'false bifid') rather than composed of two separate pieces luted together as is more typical of the Italian versions of the form⁸.

The recognition of Dressel 2-4 amphoras among the material from the Field 410 pit also focuses attention on the double 'flagon stamp' illustrated in the original report⁹. The stamps are apparently from two different dies, quite clearly impressed, but unfortunately only small parts remain on the extant sherd. No expansion to the name of a potter is possible. It is also difficult to estimate the diameter or orientation of the neck of the vessel from the existing sherd, but it may have originally been similar to the illustration in Fig. 2, FSI, with the wall starting to flair out towards a shoulder. The construction is certainly rather lightweight for a traditional amphora, but the overall dimensions are

comparable with some of the Gaulish Dressel 2-4s from Augst illustrated by Martin-Kilcher¹⁰ or those from the kilns at Mougou, which includes a number of 'half-size' specimens¹¹. It is clear that the Dressel 2-4s from the known Gaulish producers are quite diverse in their typological characteristics, with the details of the forms varying from one workshop to another¹². Stamps were placed on the neck and shoulders of Dressel 2-4s, and this is indeed the location of the *Dares* stamp on one of the amphoras recovered in 1975¹³.

Amphoras of this type were usually made alongside a range of flagons, bowls, jars and other types, and this is apparently the pattern we have at Brockley Hill. It is to these other elements that we can now turn.

The origins of the Field 410 potter

The general stylistic origins of an assemblage of forms such as that from the Field 410 pit are reasonably clear. Flagons and mortaria are essentially 'Roman' forms without any counterpart in the pre-Roman ceramic traditions of south-east Britain. Where we have evidence of their manufacture within a decade or so of the conquest, as here

8. Martin-Kilcher *op cit* fn 7, 329-32, 342-4.

9. Castle *op cit* fn 1, 39, Fig. 4, FSI.

10. S. Martin-Kilcher *Die römischen Amphoren aus Augst und Kaiseraugst. Ein Beitrag zur römischen Handels- und Kulturgeschichte. 3, Archäologische und Naturwissenschaftliche Tonbestimmungen; Katalog und Tafeln (Gruppen 2-24)* Forschungen in Augst 7, Römermuseum, Augst (1994) Tafeln

110-2.

11. F. Laubenheimer 'La production d'amphores de deux ateliers de potiers du bassin de la Loire Moyenne' *RACFr* 25, 1 (1986) 175-187.

12. Desbat *op cit* fn 7, 85 and Pl. 28.

13. Castle *op cit* fn 4, Fig. 3, A21.

Form	White wares	Grey wares	Notes
Dressel 2-4 amphoras	48-9		large handle scar on no. 48
Collared flagons	16-37, 39-46		most have 3-rib handle, where traces remain
Ring-necked flagons	47		
Disc-mouthed flagon	14		
Beaded-rim flagon	15		
Other flagons	38, 50		
Plain necked jars	7-8, 58		
Grooved-neck jars	5	3-4, 9-II, 51	
Handled jars	6		with handle scar
Ovoid jar	60		
Other jars	52-3	54-7	
2-handled bowls	1, 13		handle scar on no. 13. Usk type 20.
Loop-handled bowl	74		Usk type 22.
Flat-rim bowls	68	12, 66, 67, 69	
Flanged bowl	70		
Plain dishes	71-3		no. 72 drawn from 2 different vessels
Tazze	2		
Lids	61-3	64-5	plain 'handles' with whorl marks
Mortaria	M1-M3		plus further unillustrated sherds

Table 1 Brockley Hill Field 410 Site B Pit: summary of the pottery assemblage

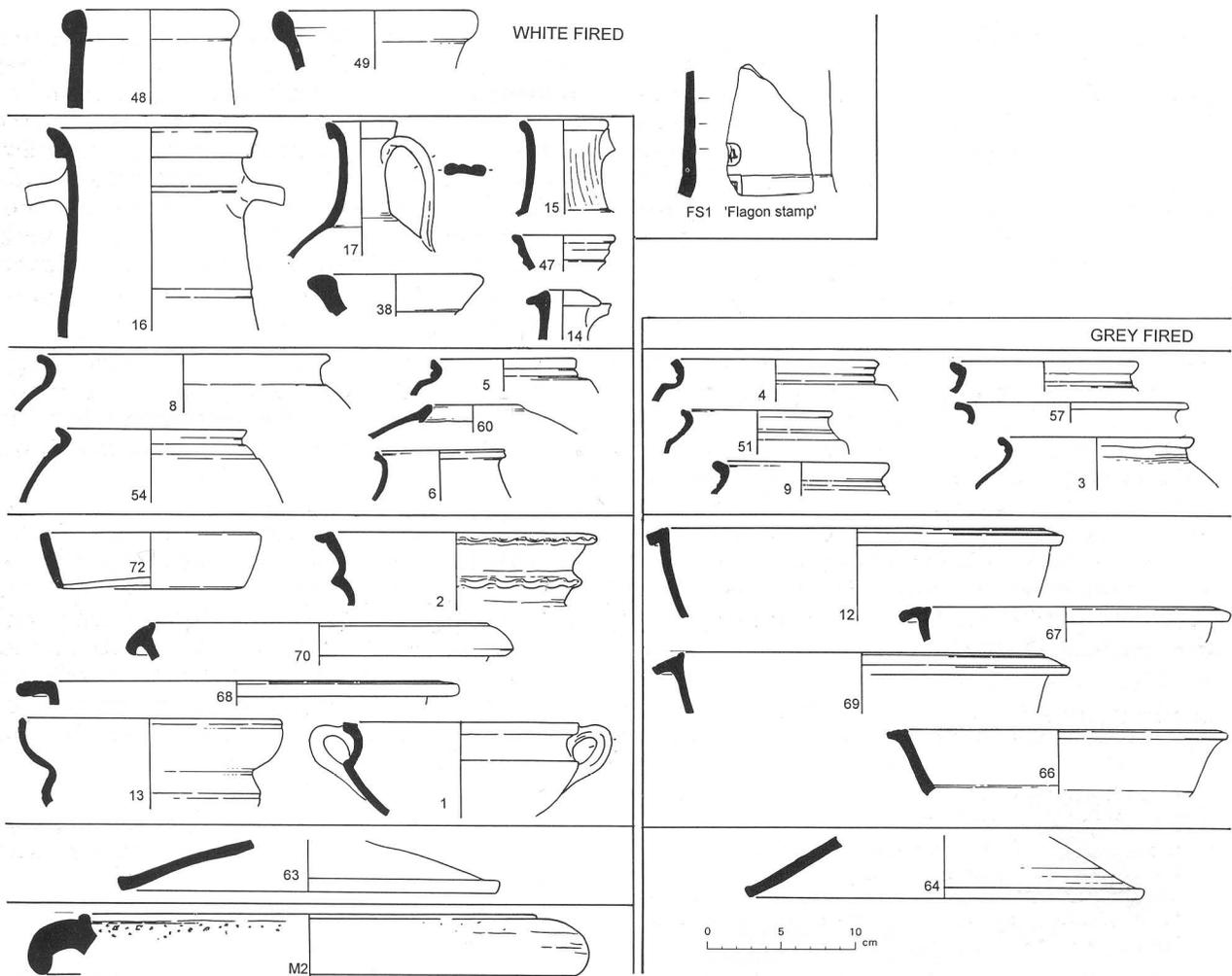


Fig. 2: Brockley Hill, Field 410, Site B, Pit: summary of pottery assemblage

at Brockley Hill, it is likely that the potters were migrants into the new province from elsewhere in the Empire. The work of such individuals has been recognised at a number of pre-Flavian sites in southern Britain. By studying the details of the forms produced by these potters it may be possible to suggest a more specific area of origin¹⁴. Within the Verulamium-region potteries, the only other substantial assemblage of pre-Flavian date that can usefully be compared with the material from the Field 410 pit is the assemblage from the kiln at Little Munden Farm, Bricket Wood (Herts). This site is some 7km to the NNW of Brockley Hill, in the direction of St Albans, and was operated by the

mortarium potter *Oastrius*, probably during the period AD 55-80¹⁵.

The overall composition of the Field 410 pit group is summarised in Table 1 and Fig. 2. The group can be partitioned, broadly, between grey-fired jars and bowls and lighter coloured flagons, dishes, mortaria and more exotic types, such as two-handled bowls. The most common form is the collared flagon, perhaps as many as twenty-five or thirty specimens. In the much larger Bricket Wood kiln group there are approximately equal numbers of collared flagons and ring-necked flagons (18.5% and 16.5% respectively) and the Field 410 pit is the

14. The most extensive analysis of this phenomenon in Britain is Greene's discussion of the origins of the potters who were supplying the Neronian fortress at Usk in south Wales; Greene in W. H. Manning *The Roman pottery* Report on the excavations at Usk, 1965-1976, University of Wales Press[for]

the Board of Celtic Studies of the University of Wales, Cardiff (1993).

15. C. Saunders and A. B. Havercroft 'A kiln of the potter Oastrius and related excavations at Little Munden Farm Bricket Wood' *Herts Archaeol* 5 (1977) 109-56.

only assemblage of any size yet recovered from the Verulamium-region potteries where the collared flagon predominates. This is likely to be due, at least partly, to the relative chronology of the groups. However these flagon types have wide continental distributions¹⁶ and do not help to pin down the origins of the potter responsible for this pit group.

A rather more unusual element of the assemblage are the grey jars with grooves and cordons on the neck, and angular shoulders. Rather than being a personal quirk of the potter, these may be related to a style of grooved-neck jars whose origins lie in the coarse ware traditions of Switzerland, the Upper Rhine and Burgundy¹⁷. The least that can be said (in our current state of knowledge) is that they have more in common with the pottery of this area than with other parts of Gaul. There is no sign of any such forms among the vessels from the Bricket Wood kiln, where the jars are of the 'standard' Brockley Hill type, with rounded or thickened lip, plain neck and rounded shoulder.

A combination of grey jars and bowls and lighter coloured flagons can be seen in production assemblages of the 1st century AD from sites within the probable area of origin of the grooved-neck jars, such as Lyon¹⁸. In contrast, the products of Bricket Wood are all in the standard range of Verulamium-region white wares, with no distinction in the firing of different forms¹⁹.

Amphoras, mortaria and Gaulish potters

The pottery from the Field 410 pit at Brockley Hill demonstrates that production of the Dressel 2-4 amphoras commenced at the site during the pre-Flavian period, indeed they may have been present, even if only in small numbers, from the very beginnings of the industry. The production of flat-based amphora-like vessels in the Verulamium-region industry²⁰ seems to start during the Flavian period, and may be seen as a secondary development -- as evidence accumulates this may be seen to

be the pattern on some production sites in Gaul as well. The implication of pre-Flavian amphoras for the history of any Romano-British wine industry should also be considered. If these vessels were intended for a British vintage²¹ rather than (for instance) filling with imported wines, then we can place the founding of this vignoble firmly in the pre-Flavian period, and probably pre-Boudiccan. A plausible historical context for this development might be the wave of investments made in the new province in the years immediately following the conquest²².

As for the origin of the Field 410 amphora potter, there are indications of some familiarity with the potting traditions of the upper Rhine or eastern-central Gaul, suggesting that he was an immigrant from that region -- an area where Dressel 2-4 production is also attested during the mid-1st century AD²³. There are no stamped mortaria in the pit group so we cannot give a name to the potter who produced these vessels (although it may be preserved in the fragmentary 'flagon stamp'), so his suggested origin cannot be linked to the career of any of the known Verulamium-region mortarium potters.

This leaves unresolved the matter of the origin of the first wave of mortarium producers in the industry. *Oastrius* of Bricket Wood is one of a group of potters, including *Albinus*, *Ripanus* and others, who employed counterstamps mentioning LVGV DV or LVGD. This can be interpreted as a reference to a site somewhere in the Brockley Hill - St Albans region called *Lug[su]dunum*, from where they operated. The question of the origin of these potters has been addressed recently by K. F. Hartley, who confirms that there is no evidence that any of them produced stamped mortaria on the continent before their activities in Britain²⁴.

However, it is also clear that the practice of mortarium stamping is quite uneven across the northern provinces. Stamped mortaria, and indeed

16. Greene *op cit* fn 14, types 1-9.

17. As represented in Britain by Usk type 12 (Greene *op cit* fn 14, 25-33 & Fig. 11). The distribution of this form is now known to extend further east into Burgundy, where several kiln sites have been reported, e.g. M. Joly 'Terra nigra, terra rubra, céramiques à vernis rouge pompéien, peintes et communes: répertoire, chronologie et faciès régionaux en Bourgogne romaine' in *Actes du Congrès de Dijon. 16-19 mai 1996. Société Française d'Étude de la Céramique Antique en Gaule* ed. L. Rivet, SFECAg, Marseille (1996) III-138.

18. For instance the kiln at Trion, Desbat (ed) *op cit* fn 7, 63-8.

19. Grey fired Verulamium-region wares are present in small numbers in assemblages from London (Davies & Richardson *op cit* fn 6, 52-3, code VRG) where they seem to be most

common during the Flavian-Trajanic period.

20. Symonds *op cit* fn 4.

21. Sealey *op cit* fn 5, 129.

22. Dio Cassius LXII.iii.1.

23. The potter working at or near Sugar Loaf Court in the City of London during the pre-Boudiccan period also had contacts with the same region, as again demonstrated by the range of forms produced (Davies & Richardson *op cit* fn 6, 29-34).

24. K. F. Hartley 'The incidence of stamped mortaria in the Roman Empire, with special reference to imports to Britain' in *Form and fabric. Studies in Rome's material past in honour of B. R. Hartley* ed. J. Bird, Oxbow monograph 80, Oxbow Books (1998) 199-200.

mortaria of any type, are very uncommon in some areas. In addition to Britain, the only two regions with high numbers of stamped mortaria and, it is suggested, large numbers of unstamped vessels as well²⁵, are 1) northern *Gallia Belgica* (Belgium and the border areas of France, near Bavay) and 2) parts of Upper Germany and eastern *Gallia Lugudunensis* (covering western Switzerland, the Upper Rhine valley and Burgundy).

These two areas might have been those from which potters were recruited during the Claudio-Neronian period for the new pottery workshops of Britain. In this context, the suggested origin of the Brockley Hill Field 410 potter might be of some

25. *Ibid* 209-214 and Fig. 8.

26. The mortarium stamps seem to be the only reference to a *Lugudunum* in the area of the Verulamium-region potteries, although there is an entry in the Ravenna Cosmography listing another site of this name, apparently located somewhere in the north of England (for which see A. L. F. Rivet and C. Smith *The place-names of Roman Britain* Batsford, London (1979) 401-2). As a name, *Lugudunum* has a respectable Celtic pedigree and might be considered alongside a series of other Romano-British place-names with the *-dunum* ending. A. L. F. Rivet 'Celtic Names and Roman Places' *Britannia* 11 (1980) 9-18.

27. The possibility that the stamps refer to something other than the place of manufacture might also be considered. The series is quite varied, and includes stamps reading FLVGV DV, FEC LVGD, LVGD.F and LVGV DV/FACTVS, where the abbreviated LVGV DV.. element is usually interpreted as '[made] at *Lugudunum*'.

However, an unrelated mortarium stamp from Saintes (in Aquitaine) reading LVGV DVNENSIS (published by M.-H. Santrot and J. Santrot *Céramiques commune gallo-romaines d'Aquitaine* CNRS, Paris (1979) form 196) does illustrate one alternative expansion, perhaps 'made by the potters from *Lugudunum*', rather than at a place of that name.

relevance, for he seems to have been familiar with some of the traditions of the second of these areas -- Switzerland, the Rhine valley and Burgundy -- at least judging by the forms produced.

The final part of the jigsaw may be the use of the *Lug[u]dunum* counter-stamp itself²⁶. It might be coincidence that the mortarium potters seem to have operated from a site in Britain that bore the same name as the capital of Gaul, Lyon, that was itself located in one of the few areas in the western Empire with a strong tradition of mortarium use. However, it does seem that at least one potter had moved to Britain from somewhere in this area to work in the new pottery industry at Brockley Hill²⁷.

This information would make rather more sense for potters to proclaim on their vessels if *Lugudunum* had some reputation as a producer of mortaria, and indeed it is now becoming clear that mortaria made in the Rhône valley, perhaps not far from Lyon, are widely distributed across Gaul and Britain during the Neronian-Flavian period (for summary of Rhône valley mortaria see P. A. Tyers *Roman Pottery in Britain* Batsford, London (1996) 130-1). This may have been enough to make a 'Lyon-type mortarium', even one made in Britain or by a potter from Lyon, worth marking as such.

If *Lugudunum* did exist in the Verulamium-region potteries, it may have been so named as a deliberate allusion by the potters working there, rather as Josiah Wedgwood chose Etruria as the title of his pottery factory at Stoke-on-Trent in the 1760s. However, given the evident contrasts between Lyon, the great capital of the Three Gauls perched above the confluence of the Rhône and Saône rivers, and a collection of clay pits and kilns somewhere in the Middlesex forests it may have been intended rather more playfully.

I am indebted to Mark Hassall and Mrs Kay Hartley for discussions on the interpretation of the *Lugudunum* stamps, although they are not responsible for the suggestions made above.

Excavations and post-excavation work

City of London. Museum of London Archaeology Service, Walker House, 87 Queen Victoria Street, London EC4V 4AB (0171-410 2200).

Croydon & District, processing and cataloguing of excavated and museum collections every Tuesday throughout the year. Archaeological reference collection of fabric types, domestic animal bones, clay tobacco pipes and glass ware also available for comparative work. Enquiries to Jim Davison, 28 Blenheim Park Road, South Croydon, CR2 6BB.

Greater London (except north-east and south-east London), by Museum of London Archaeology Service. Excavations and processing in all areas. General enquiries to MOLAS, Walker House, 87 Queen Victoria Street, London EC4V 4AB (0171-410 2200).

Borough of Greenwich. Cataloguing of excavated and other archaeological material, the majority from sites in the borough. For further information contact Greenwich Borough Museum, 232 Plumstead High Street, London SE18 1JT (0181-855 3240).

Hammersmith & Fulham, by Fulham Archaeological Rescue Group. Processing of material from Fulham Palace. Tuesdays, 7.45 p.m.-10 p.m. at Fulham Palace, Bishop's Avenue, Fulham Palace Road, SW6. Contact Keith Whitehouse, 86 Clancarty Road, SW6 (0171-731 4498).

Kingston, by Kingston upon Thames Archaeological Society. Rescue sites in the town centre. Enquiries to Kingston Heritage Centre, Fairfield Road, Kingston (0181-546 5386).

Surrey, by Surrey County Archaeological Unit. Enquiries to Rob Poulton, Archaeological Unit Manager, Old Library Headquarters, 25 West Street, Dorking, RH4 1DE (01306-886 466).

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