

Roman Pottery from the Excavations at Spencroft Road, Newcastle-under-Lyme

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By

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Abstract

Over 14kg of pottery from the Roman site at Holditch was examined, and found to date between about AD80-160; most of the pottery was made either locally or came from nearby kilns at Holt or Wilderspool, with some Black Burnished Ware from Dorset and mortaria from Verulamium. Samian from southern Gaul was also identified in fairly large amounts, including possible evidence of a single consignment of vessels which include erotic scenes. Vessel types suggest a site with at least some degree of recreational function.

Introduction

This report is based upon a complete examination of all the pottery received from the 1994 excavations at the site of Spencroft Road, Holditch. The material was studied by context and recorded on proforma sheets according to an intra-site fabric type-series. Fabric groups were recorded in terms of vessel parts, forms, sherd count, weight, radius (of rim and base) and eves (based upon rims) present, with notes upon the general condition of the sherds. Only selective vessels are illustrated - as representative of vessel types present or because of some peculiarity; all legible, decorated Samian has been drawn. The report is divided into three sections: the fabric-type series, a summary of the quantified data by context, and a general discussion on the assemblage.

The Fabric Type-Series

Fabrics were examined and described with the aid of a x20 magnification hand lens, and grouped in the first instance into finewares, coarsewares, mortaria and amphorae, the first letter of which precedes the fabric-type number; thus F2 refers to fineware fabric number two. Range of vessels in the fabric is noted with sizes, dates and the contexts in which they occur; questions of provenance (ie. kiln source) are raised at the end.

Samian

All the samian appeared to have a similar fabric - a very soft, smooth orange-pink matrix, with moderate irregular fine white flecks, and very sparse mica. The red-brown slip rarely survives to any appreciable extent on the sherds which were quite badly abraded, obscuring the decoration on several pieces. This is almost certainly all Flavian from South Gaul, also evidenced by the vessels forms and more particularly the figures on the decorated sherds. Details of vessels are given below (figure type numbers refer to those in Oswald 1964):

Plain forms

- a) Drag.18 (Flavian; ctxs: 1,77,136)
- b) Drag.18/31 (Domitian-Trajan; ctxs: 11,74,76)
- c) Drag.36 - but without or worn away barbotine scrolls; internal base groove (Domitian; ctx 12)

Decorated forms

d) Drag.37:

i) ovolos very abraded; panelled with wavy-line border; bird (similar to O.2267) over cupid (O.406); couple (O.C); bird (similar to O.2237) (Fig.1.2). Another large fragment probably from the same vessel with bird (similar to O.2237) over naked man (O.646); couple (similar but definitely not the same as O.D - perhaps the original of which Oswald's is the copy?) (Fig.1.3; ctx 1/SF no.304).

ii) ovolos very abraded; panelled with wavy-line border; indistinct leaping animal over pair of naked men (similar to O.646, but reversed); couple (O.374); indistinct leaping animal (same) over indistinct figure; basal wreath of acute chevrons (Fig.1.1; ctx 1/SF no.304).

iii) Panelled decoration with Hercules slaying the Hydra (O.786) between two St.Andrew's Cross motifs (Fig.1.4; ctx 74)

iv) Zoned decoration with winding tendril over arced festoon (Fig.1.6; ctx 77/SF no.317).

v) Ovolos over St.Andrew's Cross motif (Fig.1.5; ctx 83).

Both the plain and decorated forms suggest a narrow date range for the Samian (Domitian-Trajan), which is supported by the lack of earlier forms such as Drag.29 or later Central Gaulish vessels. Indeed, there is some possibility that at least certainly a part of the samian assemblage is from a single consignment because of the close affinities between the identified figure-types. No name stamps were found on any of the vessels, and since figure-types were often shared, particularly amongst South Gaulish potters, it is difficult to attribute the vessels; yet from cross-comparison, the names that recur most frequently in association with the figures are MERCATOR and COSIVS at La Graufesenque (and in

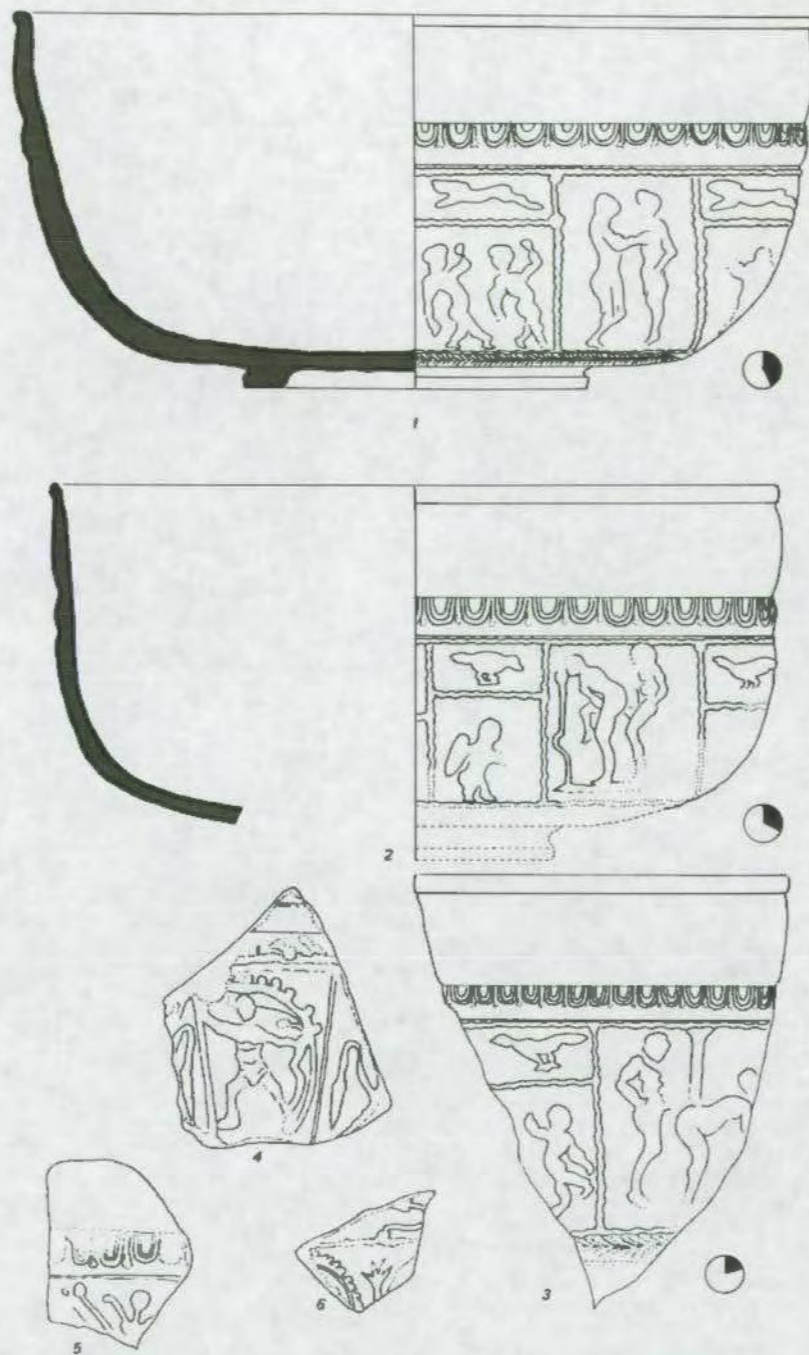


Figure 1. Samian (1:2)

some cases, Banassac). A single potter then may be responsible for many/all of the decorated vessels - not necessarily one of those named, but one who worked closely with them, and on dating, during the reign of Domitian (AD81-96). A comparative case occurs at Northwich c.15 miles north of Holditch where a group of Flavian-Trajanic Samian was found to share similarities - more interesting, several of the figure types (viz. cupid, naked man, bird) appear identical to those here (F.Wild, in Jones 1971,63-66).

Finewares

F1 A soft, finely-textured matrix predominantly showing an orange-brown to buff-brown core, a thin sharp margin of dark brown and a pinkish-buff surface, though occasionally the fabric is more evenly fired to a buff-white/buff-pink with a diffuse orange-pink core. The fabric has moderate poorly-sorted medium to fine (0.5-0.1mm) subangular quartz grains, with occasional fine bloating and carbonised organic remnants, and sparse mica. Where it has survived, the surface shows evidence of a thin buff-brown slip, though this need not have occurred on all vessels, while the rouletted bowls have a red-brown slip (see below). The range of vessels which occur in this fabric include:

- a) *devolved ring-necked flagon* with cupped rim/amphora (mouth diameters: 5cm, 7cm, 10cm, 13cm; Hadrianic-Antonine; ctxs: 1, 11, 74, 82 (fig.2.16); handle from 77 may be from similar flagon).
- b) *globular beaker* with short flared rim (mouth diameters: 10cm, 12cm, 15cm; Flavian; ctxs: unstratified, 74, 79).
- c) *lid* (ctxs: 11, 77).
- d) *carinated bowl* with straight single-grooved rim (mouth diameter: 8cm; Trajanic-Hadrianic; ctxs: 1, 75).
- e) *rouletted bowl* with traces of red-brown slip, probably copying Drag.29 (Flavian; ctxs: 74, 75, 77).

Also one sherd from a beaker with barbotine decoration under a dark brown slip was found in this type of fabric (ctx 97); several sherds of 'Castor' ware were found in the 1957-9 excavations, though the fabric of the present sherd resembles the local wares rather than a Nene Valley product (Charlton 1961, fig 6.21).

F2 A soft, sandy but finely textured matrix with either a reduced grey core or oxidised to orange-red, both with rather diffuse edges to variously shaded orange through pink to buff margins and surface. The fabric has moderate to sparse poorly-sorted fine (0.1-

0.25mm) subangular quartz and moderate mica. Some sherds show traces of a white slip. Vessels include:

- a) *globular beaker* with short flared rim (Flavian; ctxs: unstratified, 1).
- b) *small neckless jar* with everted rim (mouth diameter: 10cm; late 1st/early 2nd century AD; ctx 11 - angular bead rim, ctx 83 - concave bead rim). Cf. Wilderspool small jar, no.41 (Hartley & Webster 1973, fig.5.41).
- c) *Hofheim flagon* with collared rim (mouth diameter: c.10 cm; pre- to early Flavian; ctx 77; a handle comes from the same context and is probably from the same/a similar vessel).
- d) *Large jug* with narrow neck, applied spout (broken off), frilled rim, and applied decoration of a phallus(?) - fig.2.15 (mouth diameter: 18cm; early 2nd century AD; ctx 83/SF no.316). Cf. Wilderspool jug no.16 (Hartley & Webster 1973, fig.4.16) and Holt no.217 (Grimes 1930, fig.73.216).
- e) *Cup* - imitation of Drag.27 with prominent bead lip - cf. Holt (Grimes 1930, fig.70.166). (mouth diameter: 6cm; late 1st/early 2nd century AD; ctx 83).

One sherd may come from a folded beaker (ctx 1), though it is small and by no means unambiguous.

F3 A hard, sandy but fine matrix with a dark to mid grey-brown core and mid to pale grey surface with moderate mica and sparse medium sized (0.25-0.5mm) subangular quartz inclusions. Many sherds have a thick, smooth black slip, which may classify them as imitation *Terra Nigra*. Vessels include:

- a) *bag-shaped beaker* with short flared rim (2nd century; ctx 74, and possibly in ctx 114). One sherd with roughcast or barbotine dots (ctx 45) probably comes from a vessel of this type.
- b) *neckless jar* with short flared rim (late 1st/early 2nd century AD; ctx 74, and possibly in ctx 121).
- c) *grooved bowl*, in thick black slip probably imitating Drag.37 (Flavian-Trajanic; ctx 97). This may be classed as a *Terra Nigra* copy, and a vessel in a similar fabric and finish (but copying a Curle 15 type dish) was found in earlier excavations (Charlton 1962, fig.6.1).

Two thin-walled sherds in this fabric had a green glaze, one with barbotine dots under the glaze (ctx 1), and another with buff margins and surface under a glaze on both sides (ctx 97), suggesting it came from an open vessel such as a cup or fine bowl. These are almost certainly *not* imports from the Alliers valley but of fairly local manufacture - probably Holt (Grimes 1930, 182-3), though fragments which were tentatively identified as a saggar

came from the 1960-61 excavations, which might suggest the ware was made on site (Charlton 1962,69-70).

Coarsewares

C1 Very soft, irregular to hackly textured matrix showing a grey to brown core, diffuse brown-buff to grey margins and pink-buff to white-buff surfaces (or grey on the interior of closed vessels (or vessels inverted during firing), though occasionally fired more evenly to an oxidised orange to pink-buff colour. The fabric has moderate poorly-sorted medium to fine (0.5-0.1mm) subangular quartz, sparse mica and sparse medium-sized red-brown grog. The surface may be grey-slipped or self-coloured. Possibly a coarser version of F1. Vessels include:

a) *neckless jar* with short flared rim (mouth diameters: 9cm, 12cm; late 1st/early 2nd century AD; ctxs: 1,77,83).

b) *short-necked globular jar* with short everted rim (mouth diameters: 7cm, 9cm, 10cm, 13cm; Trajanic-Hadrianic; ctxs: 1,6,18 (fig.2.11),75 (fig.2.12),77,103). Cf. Charlton 1961, fig.6.24.

c) *carinated bowl* with convex sides and straight or slightly depressed reeded rim in buff, grey or red-brown slip (mouth diameters: 11cm, 13cm, 18cm; Trajanic-Hadrianic; ctxs: 18,47 (fig.2.9),97 (fig.2.7),103). One vessel (ctx 47/fig.2.9) has a warped flange, which although technically a 'waster', may not exclude it from having been used; however, whether it would have travelled is another matter, and this may suggest that it was made on the site.

d) *globular beaker* with tall upright rim (Domitian-Trajanic; ctx 83). Cf. Holt no.191 (Grimes 1930, fig.71.191).

e) *lid* (ctx 83).

One sherd (ctx 47) is either from a folded beaker or more likely a fragment from a waster; in conjunction with the warped bowl (see above), this is further evidence for pottery production on site.

C2 A soft, irregular sandy textured matrix with a grey (or occasionally red-brown) core, sharp or diffuse dark brown margins and a pale to mid grey surface. The fabric has abundant to moderate medium sized (0.25-0.5mm) subangular quartz, moderate mica and moderate poorly-sorted pale to dark grey grog. Some sherds have a mid-grey slip surviving. Possibly a coarser version of F3. Vessels include:

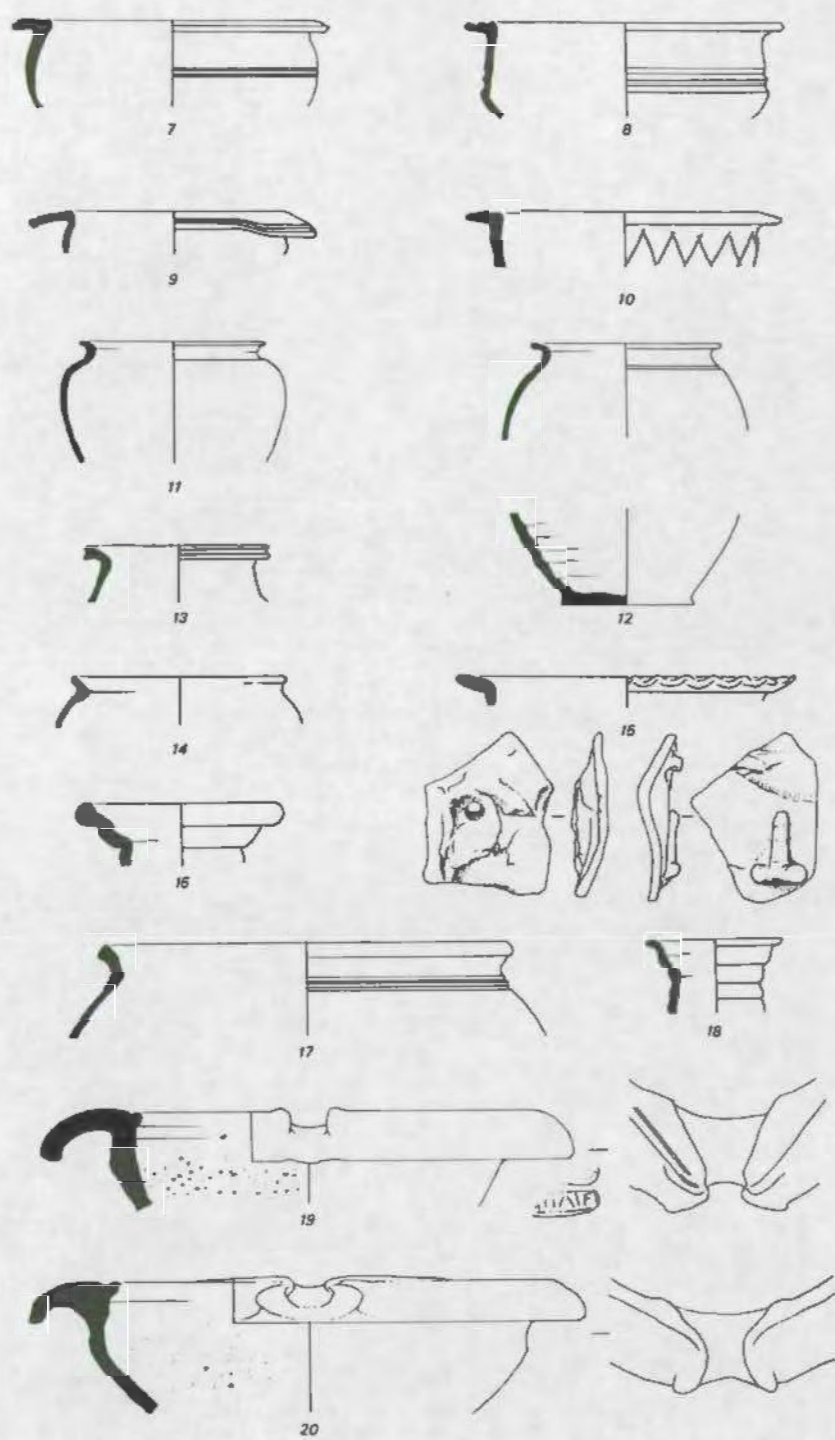


Figure 2. Local Wares (1:4)

a) *neckless jar* with angular flared rim, though one example with bilobed rim (ctx 83), and on another larger sherd, shoulder grooves (ctx 74); (mouth diameters: 9cm, 10 cm, 11cm, 13 cm, 14cm, 16cm; late 1st/early 2nd century AD; ctxs: unstratified, 25, 47, 74, 75, 83 (fig.2.13), 112). A vessel with thin vertical lines of rustication occurs in ctx 18, and although no rim was matched, this decoration occur at Holt on neckless jar like these (Grimes 1930, fig.63.51-52).

b) *small neckless jar/globular beaker* with short flared or upright rim; one vessel (ctx 97) has barbotine dots on the shoulder (mouth diameters: 9cm, 12cm; Flavian; ctxs: 77, 79, 97, 103).

c) *short-necked jar* with everted rim; on the largest vessel, grooving occurs at the junction of the neck and shoulder (ctx 18); (mouth diameters: 8cm, 13cm, 14cm, 15cm, 21 cm; late 1st/early 2nd century AD; ctxs: unstratified, 1, 6, 18 (fig.2.17), 77, 97, 136) One body sherd (ctx 1) has burnished acute lattice imitating the BB1 cooking jars (see fabric C4).

d) *lid* (diameter 15cm; ctx 77).

e) *carinated bowl* with straight sides and reeded rim (mouth diameter: 14cm; Trajanic-Hadrianic; ctxs 97, 114 (fig.2.8); cf. Holt (Grimes 1930, fig.66.90). Another bowl (ctx 102), probably carinated but with a plain thickened rim resembles that from Holt no.89 (Grimes 1930, fig.65.89).

A rouletted vessel is represented by a base (ctx 97), and (probably) a jug by a handle (ctx 102); the rouletted vessel somewhat resembles a beaker from Holt which was not however considered to be a kiln product (Grimes 1930, fig.73.220).

C3 A soft irregular sandy textured matrix usually oxidised to an even orange/red-orange though occasionally it may have a diffuse grey-buff core. The fabric has abundant ill-sorted medium to fine (0.5-0.1mm) subangular quartz, sparse mica and moderate grog, though thicker-walled vessels have additional coarse white subangular quartzite and golden mica flakes. Possibly a coarser version of F2. Vessels include:

a) *ring-necked flagon* with flaring rim (mouth diameter: 7cm; Neronian-Flavian; ctx 11; fig.2.18). Cf. Holt (Grimes 1930, fig.67.103) and Wilderspool (Hartley & Webster 1973, fig.2.2).

b) *neckless jar* with everted rim and grooved at the junction of rim and shoulder (mouth diameter: 11cm; late 1st/early 2nd century AD; ctx 75).

c) *narrow-necked jar* with everted rim (mouth diameter: 5cm; late 1st/early 2nd century AD; ctx 135).

d) *lid* (ctx 112).

C4 (BB1) A hard, irregular matrix with a black to brown-grey core, thin diffuse or sharp mid to dark brown margins and black surface. The fabric has abundant well-sorted medium-sized (0.25-0.5mm) subrounded whitish to translucent quartz grains and sparse mica. The surface often has burnished lattice. Vessels represented on the site include:

- a) *cooking pot* (Gillam 1976, fig.1) - necked jar with slightly flared rim (2nd century forms; ctxs: 1,18,74,77).
- b) *flat-rimmed bowl/dish* (Gillam 1976, figs 3 & 4); most vessels have a flat topped-rim (mouth diameters: 13cm, 15cm, 16cm; Hadrianic; ctxs: 13,74 (fig.2.10),76,102), but one has a slightly curved rim with an internal bevel (mouth diameter: 14cm; Hadrianic-Antonine; ctx 1).
- c) *grooved-rimmed bowl/dish* (Gillam 1976, figs 4 & 5); (Hadrianic-Antonine; ctxs: 74,75,77).
- d) *neckless jar* with short flared rim (Gillam 1976, fig.3); (mouth diameter: 7cm; Hadrianic-Antonine; ctx 49).

C5 A soft, irregular matrix, fired to an even buff/white with abundant medium-sized (0.25-0.5mm) well-sorted subangular quartz. The fabric is very reminiscent of the Verulamium region, and given the vessel type (see below) and the presence of Verulamium mortaria on the site, it seems highly probable that this is the provenance of this fabric type. Only one vessel form represented as far as can be determined:

- a) *Large devolved ring-neck flagon* with cupped rim (mouth diameter: 12cm; Hadrianic-Antonine; ctx 77; large double-ribbed handles also come from ctxs 18,47, and also a flat base from ctx 18).

C6 A very soft, hackly matrix with a dark grey core, sharp buff-brown margins and brown to black surface; the fabric is highly vesicular, all the visible inclusions have dissolved except for sparse mica, leaving irregular but plate-like voids suggestive of shell. No forms were recovered, though the single sherd probably came from a jar or shouldered bowl (ctx 83). The context belongs to an earlier phase of the site and the sherd could be residual from pre-Roman activity, though it may also be an indicator of the exclusion of local traditions in favour of a highly Romanised assemblage.

Mortaria

M1 (*Verulamium region*) A soft, irregular buff fabric with abundant medium-sized (0.25-0.5mm) well-sorted subangular quartz, and buff-brown slip. Two different forms are represented but incomplete:

- a) hooked rounded flange with the distal end turned under (Hadrianic-Antonine; ctx: 1).
- b) outcurved rounded flange with bulbous distal end (Hadrianic-Antonine; ctx: 74).

M2 (*Mancetter-Hartshill/Holt?*) A soft, fine matrix with a mid yellow-brown core, thin sharp white-buff margins and a white-buff surface, though the firing may be more even producing a diffuse yellow-buff core with white-buff margins and surface. The fabric has moderate medium-sized (0.25-0.5mm) subrounded quartz, sparse coarse (0.5-1.0mm) subrounded red-brown and brown grog. Trituration consists of very coarse (>1mm) white and grey subangular quartz. Vessels include:

- a) outcurved angular flange with small internal bead; obscured makers stamp in two rows - last letters of lower row read '.... FI' (fig.2.19); the form resembles one from Whitchurch attributed to Erucanus, dated 100-135AD (Jones & Webster 1968, fig.11.116); also at Holt (Grimes 1930, fig.61.1). (mouth diameters: 30cm, 18cm, 11cm; Trajanic-Hadrianic; 83, unstratified (fig.2.19), 74). A flange from a similar vessel came from ctx 11.
- b) outcurved flange with slightly curved-under distal end (early 2nd century AD; unstratified).
- c) outcurved angular flange with thickened underside - cf. example from Northwich (Hartley, in Jones 1971, fig.19.70), attributed to Erucanus, dated 100-130AD; also from Holt (Grimes 1930, fig.61.12). (Trajanic-Hadrianic; ctx 99).

Although forms are matched by Mancetter-Hartshill types, the fabric is perhaps a little coarse and the trituration wrong; Holt may be a more likely source.

M3 (*Holt/Wilderspool*) A soft, irregular sandy matrix with a buff-brown or pink-brown diffuse core and pink-orange margins and surface. The fabric has moderate to abundant medium to fine (0.5-0.1mm) subangular quartz, sparse coarse (0.5-1.0mm) red-brown grog and sparse mica. Trituration consists of coarse subangular grog and quartz, in one case spilling onto the top of the flange. Only one vessel represented:

a) slightly hooked flange with inturned bead; cf. Holt (Grimes 1930, fig.61.10) and Wilderspool (Hartley & Webster 1973, fig.11.99-101). (mouth diameter: 20cm; Trajanic-Hadrianic; ctx 1; fig.2.20).

Sandy oxidised wares from the Cheshire plain are difficult to differentiate (Hartley & Webster 1973,89), however it has been suggested that in terms of mortaria, the fabric from Holt is pinker and with more obvious white quartz (ibid,100). Given that M2 fabric may be from Holt, this may also be a more likely source for M3 - the fabric is very similar to C3, of which the thicker-walled sherds had striking white quartz grains (these indeed may be mortaria walls); see under coarsewares above. However, it is quite possible that products from both kilns (or even a more local kiln) are represented here and indistinguishable.

Amphora

A1 (*Dressel 20*) A soft, irregular sandy matrix with buff-brown diffuse core and buff-pink margins and surface. The fabric has moderate poorly-sorted medium sized (0.25-0.5mm) subangular quartz and mica. Vessels are represented in several contexts but all as body sherds, except for one rim (mouth diameter: 10cm; late 1st/2nd century AD; ctx 77). This globular amphora from Andalusia was used principally to export olive oil to the western provinces (Peacock & Williams 1986).

The group of fabrics from Holditch are for the most part of fairly local manufacture. Affinities have been expressed between fine and coarseware fabrics (ie. F1/C1, F2/C3, and F3/C2), while further similarities occur between M2 and F1/C1 and also M3 and F2/C3. As already mentioned, pottery from the Cheshire plain is difficult to differentiate, and since the three allied fabric groups are respectively buff, red and grey wares, they could mostly come from the same kiln source, though the buff fabrics tend to be much finer/less sandier in texture than either the grey or red wares. The waster (fig.2.9) would link the buff wares with a local production, though Holt was also producing them, unlike apparently Wilderspool (Grimes 1930,143-146; Hartley & Webster 1973). Charlton claimed that no vessels from Holt were found in his excavations (Charlton 1961,32), but rusticated ware and glazed sherds from the present site are more likely to come from there than elsewhere, unless they were made on the site (see above). Charlton in fact attributes much of his greyware vessels to local manufacture, and indeed greywares are not characteristic of Wilderspool or Holt (Charlton 1961,46).

However, it seems that far more of the vessel forms can be matched at Holt than at Wilderspool, especially for the buff and grey wares, while the red wares share equal affinities with both centres. Two other kiln sites are known from the region, at Northwich

(see Hanson, in Jones 1971, 50-53) and Trent Vale (Mountford 1957), both of which were producing pottery in the lifetime of this site - in an orange-buff fabric at the former and a buff fabric at the latter - and while some vessel forms may be matched, it is far more likely that products from these kilns were only for local consumption. An interesting pattern which may be related to whether the wares at Holditch were made on or off site is the changing proportions of the coarseware fabric types with respect to the certain import, BB1 (C4; see below, and fig.3). While buffwares remain more or less stable over phases I and II, with the increase in BB1 (C4) in phase II, the greywares and especially the redwares, contract. This could be read as a change in the source of imported wares, though of course it could just as easily mean an imported ware pushing a locally-produced ware out of demand.

A summary of the pottery by context

The pottery assemblage has been simplified by expressing relative amounts per context (grouped by phase) by weight in tabular form (see tables 1-3). Comments accompany these tables on the larger and more key contexts. A summary of the fabric-types and vessel forms (based on eves) represented in phase I and II is given at the end.

Phase I

The earliest surface of the metalled street [97] contained a fairly abraded assemblage with numerous fabrics represented, but predominantly fine vessels; more particularly, a glazed sherd in F3 (probably from Holt), globular beaker in C2 and imitation of a Drag.29 in F3 all suggest that the earliest use of the metalled street occurred sometime between AD80 and 120, while a reeded bowl in C1 (fig.2.7) which dates to the early 2nd century AD gives a terminus post quem for the re-surfacing of the street [83]. The material from this second surface shows a much stronger presence of kitchen wares, slightly less abraded and all falling within the early 2nd century AD.

The fills of a refuse pit [18/6] contained a range of slightly abraded kitchen wares (mostly jars, but also a flagon in C5, probably from Verulamium) which are early 2nd century - the presence of BB1 suggests a Hadrianic date rather than any earlier (c.120-140AD). A cess-pit which was recut/backfilled with refuse [47/102] includes similar material (including a flagon in C5 and BB1), and again a Hadrianic date is the most likely.

Many of these contexts lie over earlier features which have little or no pottery and it is likely therefore that most of the ceramic activity and dates fall toward the end of phase I; there is no certain evidence of pre-Flavian pottery at all on the site, though there is certainly late

Flavian (Domitian)-Trajanic, especially through the Samian, and this would suggest a late 1st century date for the start of phase I, which ends before the middle of the 2nd century.

CTX	SAM	F1	F2	F3	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	M1	M2	M3	A1	P.Md
005								4							40
006			2		20	20									
018			1	35	595	295	5	10	795						
025						30									
037						2									
047	5				40	30	30								
078	2	30				10	15							90	
079	20	10	5		48	80	20								
083	70	15	180		230	170	45	10		25		120			
097	1	50		55	50	120	5		10						
102		1				125	170	90							
103	5				55	85	10								
112	1	10	1		5	50	10								
113	5	1			1	105									
114	20		1	15	30	105	1								
121		5		40		10	15								
132						5	1								
135	1				1	40	35								
136	15	45			50	30	110	25							
Sum	145	167	190	145	1125	1312	472	139	805	25	0	120	0	90	40

Table 1. Phase I contexts showing quantities of fabric-types by weight (in grammes).
NB. Fabric PMd (Post-Medieval) in this table shows its presence in a pit [005] attributed to phase I; this must either be intrusive or the pit of a later date.

Phase II

A cobbled surface sealing phase I buildings contained abundant pottery [77], again particularly kitchen wares - jars, amphorae, flagons; forms suggest a mid-2nd century date (140-160AD), supported by the increased presence of BB1. Samian was present but represent residual or curated vessels on account of their Flavian form (Dr.18). A similar range, though less informative, comes from the postholes of the large building (eg. [47],[75]).

CTX	SAM	F1	F2	F3	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	M1	M2	M3	A1	P.Md
008						45									
011	85	15	50				55					45		60	
012	40														
013			5		5	20		75							
016	2				5										
049								20							
075		30	1	1	295	20	30	25	1						
076	5	16			5	56		100	5						
077	48	300	170	115	210	290	10	120	45		180			155	
082		30	45												
Sum	180	391	271	116	520	431	95	340	51	0	180	45	0	215	0

Table 2. Phase II contexts showing quantities of fabric-types by weight (in grammes)

Phases III-IV

All the pottery from the ploughzone layer [74] is Roman, the latest vessels being much of the same date as in phase II (ie. Hadrianic-Antonine), though earlier vessels (specifically the Samian) are present. Exactly the same picture emerges from the sherds in the modern topsoil [1], all of which suggests that there is no ceramic evidence for any Roman activity on the site much after the middle of the 2nd century (c.AD160).

CTX	SAM	F1	F2	F3	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	M1	M2	M3	A1	P.Md
044	1					1									
045	1			5	1		1						45		
074	85	173	50	95	119	207	135	160			405	80	170		
099				2	25	1		5				50			
001	658	82	26	31	88	162	160	150	21		35		300	220	420
128		1	1			5									
U/S	35	35	10		45	170	91	10	5			210	70		325
Sum	78	291	87	133	278	546	387	325	26	0	440	340	585	220	745

Table 3. Phase III-IV contexts (including unstratified material) showing quantities of fabric-type by weight (in grammes).

Summary of Phases I - II

Most of the fabrics in phase I occur more or less with equal frequency in phase II - with a few notable exceptions. If we just look at the coarsewares (excluding C5 because it is a heavy vessel type, and C6 of which only one sherd is present), there is a very clear increase in the percentage of BB1 amongst coarsewares in Phase II, linked to a relative decline in the local fabrics C2 and C3 (see fig.3 below):

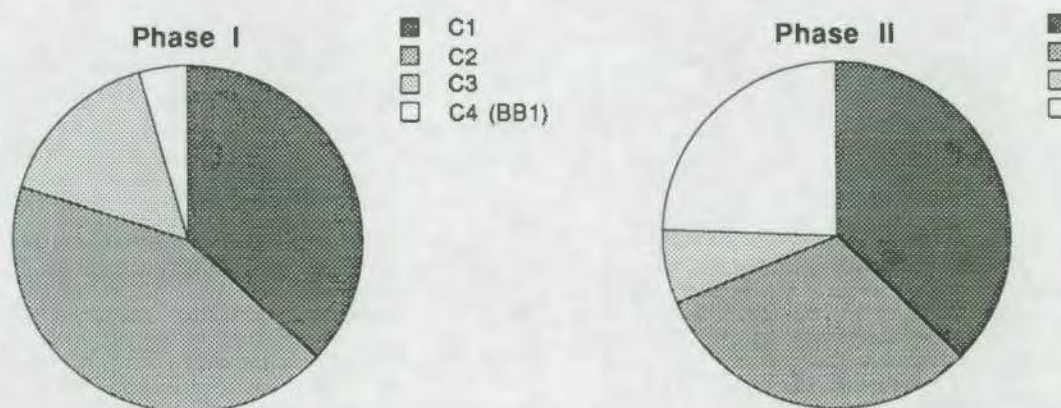


Figure 3. Pie-charts showing relative percentages of coarseware fabrics in Phases I-II.

This confirms the general pattern which sees BB1 making a first appearance in the early decades of the 2nd century, but only really taking off in the Hadrianic (ie. after c. AD120; see Webster 1991; also Gillam 1976). Notice however, that it does not dominate the assemblage, which one might expect in an Antonine assemblage, a fact which further supports the date of site's decline from c.AD140.

If we turn to the range of vessels present, there is a much wider contrast between phase I and II (fig.4 below).

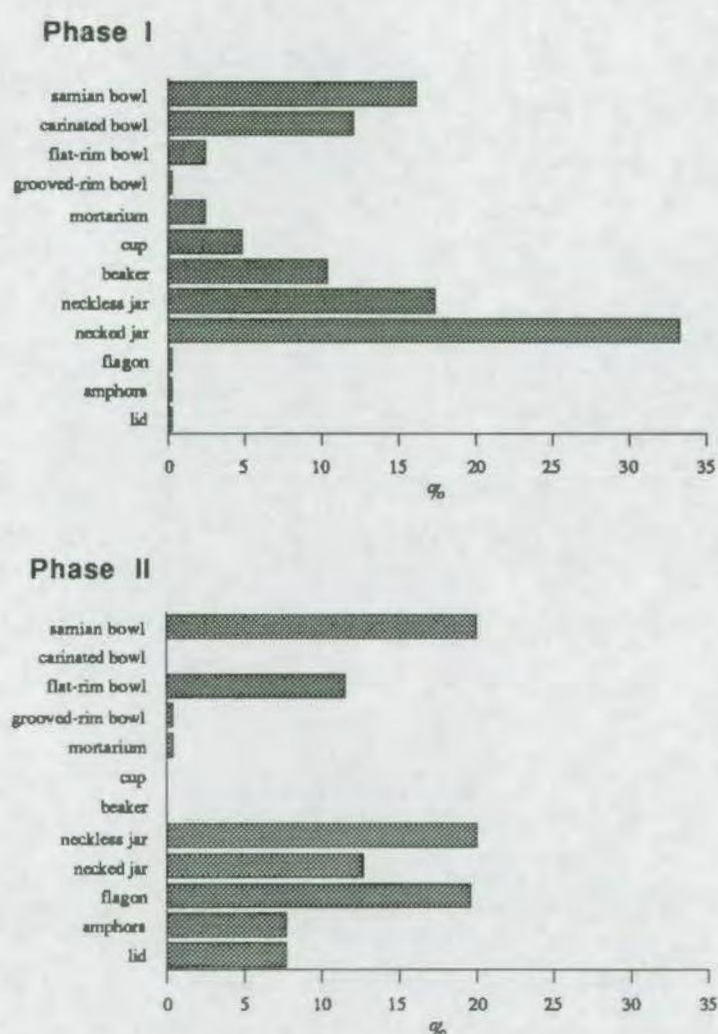


Figure 4. Changing composition of assemblage in phases I - II (based on eves).

Expressed as a percentage of the total assemblage in each phase (based on eves), several main changes can be identified. First, the complete absence of carinated bowls in phase II after a very high representation; this dearth seems related to the rise in particular of flat-rimmed bowls in phase II, which are all in BB1 (C4) and which ties in to the change

identified with fabrics above (see fig.3). Second, jars - specifically necked jars - show a marked decline in phase II; the only other corresponding rise is for flagons which show a huge increase in the later phase along with amphorae. Indeed, most of these flagons are very large (see F1) and were perhaps more for storage than tablewares, which might relate to changes in site use, and which may also be linked to the disappearance of drinking vessels (beakers and cups) in phase II (see fig.4). In summary, the range of vessels in phase I shows a good domestic assemblage, with if anything a greater than expected emphasis upon the consumption of drink and food - high numbers of drinking vessels and fine bowls/dishes (especially samian); by phase II, while there is still a high number of bowls/dishes, the range is more restricted and there is an increased emphasis on the storing and preparation of food (amphorae, huge flagons, lids).

Discussion

Phase I (particularly the latter part) with its metalled street and associated buildings appears to have the most concentrated period of activity on the site; this has been dated on the basis of ceramics to between c.80-140AD. Thereafter, the site is possibly given over to agricultural activities and the ceramic evidence suggests that this probably did not continue for more than a couple of decades, after which the site was abandoned. This agrees with Charlton's dating, which also suggests that the locus of activity shifted northeastwards over time, closer to and on the other side of the main Roman road between Wilderspool and Derby and along which the fort at Chesterton is located (Charlton 1961).

The proximity of this site to the fort and its early date does suggest some link between the two, and it is suggested that the whole settlement had primarily an industrial function, at least on the eastern side, while the western part was non-industrial in character (present report, section 8.3.4). The presence of at least one waster (see above), while suggesting that pottery may have been made in the settlement, does not however imply a kiln within the present excavation area - in fact, given the more industrial character of the eastern part, and the find of a possible saggar there, any kiln is more likely to lie on that side (Charlton 1962,64).

The pottery from the present excavation, which lies in the western part, suggests that at least in phase I, a recreational function is quite probable; perhaps an inn or some public house serving food and drink - or even a brothel. The samian is particularly interesting in this regard, not only because of its high quantity but because on some of the vessels, erotic scenes are depicted (fig.1.2-3); further sexual associations are found on the jug with the moulded phallus (fig.2.15), and the clay phallus found in a posthole (though this occurred in a phase II context). The present site in phase II was possibly given over to an

agricultural use, and the ceramics certainly support a change in usage of some sort, away from its earlier recreational function.

Index to illustrations

Figure 1 (Drag.37 Samian bowls)

1. Topsoil [001] - S.Gaulish/Domitian-Trajanic
2. Topsoil [001] - S. Gaulish/Domitian-Trajanic
3. Topsoil [001] - S. Gaulish/Domitian-Trajanic
4. B-Horizon [074] - S. Gaulish/Domitian
5. Upper street surface [083] - S. Gaulish/Domitian-Trajanic
6. Cobbled surface [077] - S. Gaulish/Domitian-Trajanic

Figure 2. (Local wares)

7. Lower street surface [097] - Carinated bowl with reeded rim (C1)
8. Pit [114] - Carinated bowl with reeded rim (C2)
9. Pit [047] - Carinated bowl with grooved rim - waster? (C1)
10. B-Horizon [074] - Flat-rimmed bowl (C4)
11. Pit [018] - Globular necked jar (C1)
12. Post-hole [075] - Globular necked jar (C1)
13. Upper street surface [083] - Bilobed jar (C2)
14. B-Horizon [074] - Neckless jar (C2)
15. Upper street surface [083] - Jug (F2)
16. Post-hole [082] - Devolved Ring-necked Flagon (F1)
17. Pit [018] - Necked jar (C2)
18. Cobbled surface [011] - Ring-necked Flagon (C3)
19. Unstratified - Mortarium with makers stamp (M2)
20. Topsoil [001] - Mortarium (M3)

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