

A Roman flagon from Ewell

The flagon illustrated (fig 1) was found at Ewell and brought to Guildford Museum for identification by a relative of the finder.¹ The precise findspot is unknown, beyond the fact that it came from a building site and lay 'about 4in below ground level'. There have been numerous earlier finds of Roman material in Ewell, including buildings, pits and ditches, suggesting a large village lying along the main road between London and Chichester.² This flagon is complete, which might indicate that it came from a funerary context.

The fabric is light orange-buff in colour, micaceous, hard and rather coarse, with dense inclusions of pale translucent quartz and some grey/white flint and black ?ironstone; there are occasional irregular vesicles up to 1mm across on the exterior surface. The exterior has a matt cream slip, now partially worn off, and there are signs of wear on the foot. The body is not symmetrical, having been slightly flattened at one side before firing. The ware indicates an origin in the potteries south of Verulamium, where similar white-slipped fabrics were produced in the 2nd century,³ but it has not been possible to find a parallel for the form among the published kiln and waster groups.

Two-handed flagons were never common in Britain, and the shape of the rim is difficult to parallel precisely. The ribbed handles and the moulding beneath the foot are features found on vessels made in the Verulamium region, and the shaping of the interior of the mouth and the cordons on the rim could suggest links with the series of ring-necked flagons produced there during the Antonine period.⁴ The flange collar, however, has no parallel among those types, though it is

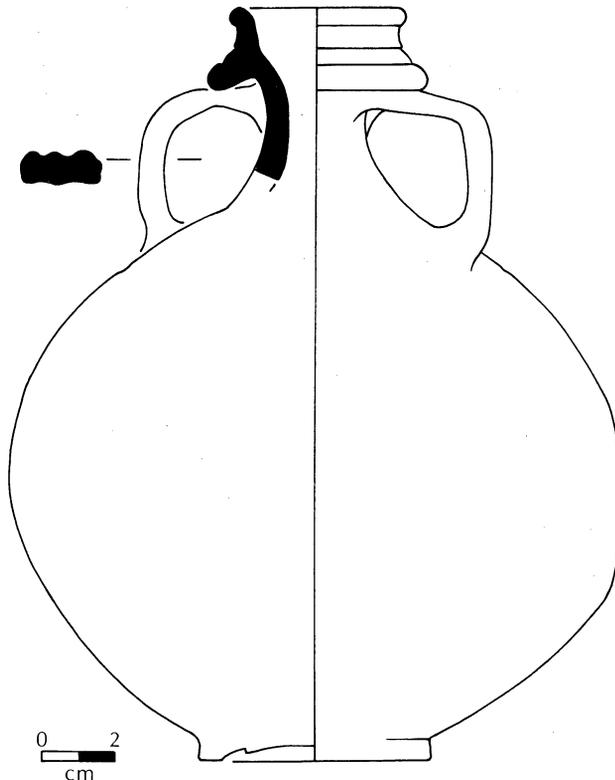


Fig 1. Roman flagon from Ewell (scale 1:2)

possible that this vessel is simply a variation made when the neck went wrong. These rather tenuous typological associations, with the fabric and general shape of the flagon, would indicate a probable date in the middle years of the 2nd century.

NOTES

- 1 Guildford Museum ref TRB 2936; I am grateful to the Museum staff for making the flagon available for study
- 2 Roman Ewell has most recently been discussed by Bird (1987, 169). Fuller details of individual finds are given by Sheldon & Schaaf 1978, fig 7 and gazetteer
- 3 Marsh and Tyers 1978, 534-5, 550
- 4 Marsh and Tyers 1978, types IB6-10

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JOANNA BIRD