

Mortaria from the river

By Eniko Hudak

Methodology

The assemblage was quantified by sherd count, weight in grams, and Estimated Vessel Equivalents (EVEs)¹. These measures have been taken as the basis of comparison for the proportions of wares within the assemblage.

All sherds have been examined by Kay Hartley, who identified the fabrics. Sherds which could not be identified, or attributed to a single production centre, were subjected to further examination. The fabrics were described in terms of colour, feel, hardness, fracture, inclusions and grits from fresh breaks following the steps of 'Visual examination' of pottery fabrics as described by Orton *et al.* (1993, 135-140).

Fresh breaks were produced with pliers and were examined on 30x magnification with a 21mm jeweller's loupe. The nature of the break was described based on the characteristics and the terminology given by Orton *et al.* (1993, 235). Colours were given in simple terms without the usage of a colour chart according to Kay Hartley's usual practice. Hardness was measured by the fabric's resistance to scratching with a fingernail (soft) and a steel blade (hard or very hard) as suggested by Rice (2005 [1987], 354-357) and Orton *et al.* (1993, 138). The 'feel' of the surface of the pot was described with the help of the terminology suggested by Orton *et al.* (1993, 235). Inclusions and grits were described in terms of size, frequency, shape and colour, following the 'Scheme for standardising fabric description' form (Peacock 1977, 29).

Due to the nature of the recovery of the assemblage, no context information was available for the *mortarium* assemblage, thus it will be presented as a whole through quantification and dating. The *mortaria* in the assemblage were dated by their fabrics and forms.

The assemblage: condition, quantification and dating

The assemblage was in a surprisingly good condition. Apart from some discolouring, river silt and rust from other objects on the surface of the sherds, there was no sign of being

¹ EVEs are given in fractions rather than percentages (e.g. 0.05 for 5 percent rim) to avoid confusion with percentages of total.

waterlogged. Only one sherd, from the Oise/Somme area, was badly damaged by the water (see Figure 1: The disintegrating Oise/Somme sherd (Source: the author)

). It was disintegrating to the touch, which occurs to this fabric when deposited in acid or wet conditions (Hartley 2009, 245). Most sherds show signs of heavy usage – abrasion marks and burning (even after fracture); one of the base sherds (Mancetter-Hartshill) was riveted (see Figure).



Figure 1: The disintegrating Oise/Somme sherd (Source: the author)



Figure 2: The riveted Mancetter-Hartshill base (Source: The Author)

There are 70 sherds in the *mortarium* assemblage, weighing 10,661.4g, and representing 6.185 EVE. More than two thirds (48 sherds – 69 percent) of the assemblage constitutes of rim sherds; body and base sherds are almost equally represented within the remaining 31 percent (see **Error! Reference source not found.**).

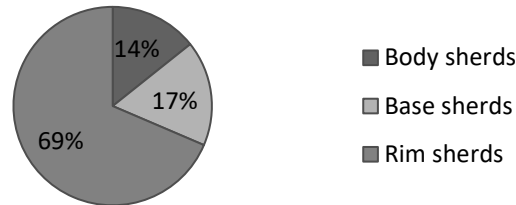


Figure 3: The proportion of rim, base and body sherds in the assemblage

It was possible to assign all sherds, but one, to Romano-British or Continental production centres. Nine different fabrics have been identified, four Romano-British, four Continental, and one 'Indeterminate' represented by the single unidentified sherd. Table 1, Figure and Figure show the quantities and proportions of the *mortaria* per fabric.

Fabric	NoSh	NoSh%	Weight (g)	Weight%	EVE	EVE%
MAH WH	39	55.71%	5320.7	49.91%	3.63	58.69%
LNV WH	16	22.86%	1408.1	13.21%	0.99	16.01%
Catterick area	5	7.14%	234.1	2.20%	0.34	5.50%
OXF WH	4	5.71%	546.5	5.13%	0.595	9.62%
Oise/Somme	1	1.43%	45.3	0.42%	0.11	1.78%
Rhineland	2	2.86%	900.3	8.44%	0.08	1.29%
SW Gaul	1	1.43%	77.7	0.73%	0	0.00%
SOL WH	1	1.43%	2050	19.23%	0.2	3.23%
indeterminate	1	1.43%	78.7	0.74%	0.24	3.88%
TOTAL:	70	100.00%	10661.4	100.00%	6.185	100.00%

Table 1: The quantification of the assemblage by number of sherds (NoSh), weight and EVE and their percentages of total

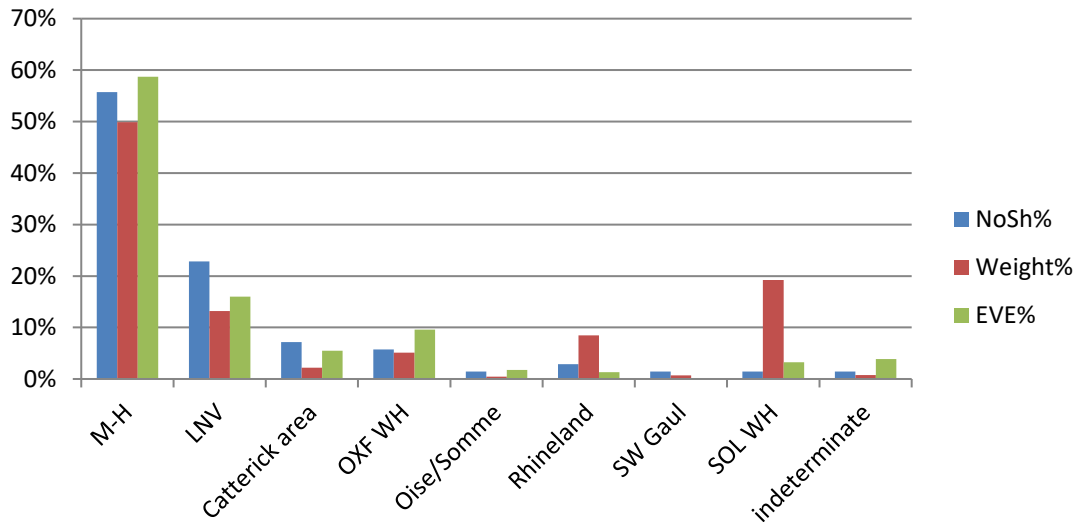


Figure 4: Chart showing the sherd count%, weight% and EVE% per fabric

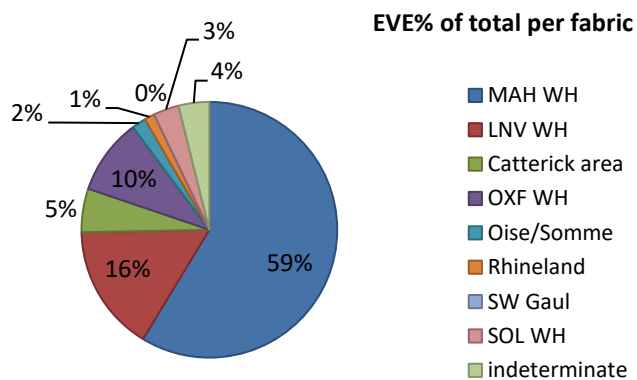


Figure 5: Pie chart showing the proportions of fabrics in the river assemblage

The assemblage is clearly dominated by Mancetter-Hartshill products: 55.7 percent in sherd count, 49.9 percent, in weight, and 58.7 percent in EVE. The second most common fabric is Lower Nene Valley with about one fifth of the total; followed by Catterick area and Oxford *mortaria* (both around 5 percent). The other five fabrics, four Continental sources and the 'indeterminate', are represented by only one or two sherds each.



Figure 6: The zoomorphic spout of the Soller *mortarium* with the position of the stamp marked (Source: The Author)

There is only one *mortarium* stamp in the assemblage: a Verecundus 2 *mortarium* from Soller, Kr. Düren (see Figure). On this example the name panel of the stamp is visible on the right side of the spout, but the letters are too degraded to be identified (Mrs Hartley pers. comm.). Soller *mortaria* made by the potter Verecundus 2 are generally between 60 cm and 90 cm in diameter (Haupt 1984, 440-442), and he always impressed his stamp along the flange, and sometimes also used thumb impressions on the spout to give the look of the eyes and snout of a pig (Hartley 1984, 471).

Both early (curved flange) and late (hammer-headed, multi-reeded flange) forms of Mancetter-Hartshill *mortaria* are represented in the assemblage, but the majority date to the third century A.D. Two of the early sherds are painted; one of them is a complete spout, which is also painted inside the spout as well as on the flange (see Figure). According to Mrs Hartley, painting of flanges at the Mancetter-Hartshill production centre was common around the time when stamping started to cease towards the end of the second century A.D. (Hartley 1973, 144; Tyers 1996, 123; for forms see Tyers 1996, 119).



Figure 7: The painted MAH WH complete spout (Source: The Author)

The Oxford rim sherds are forms M17 and M18, which are dated to A.D. 240-300 (Young 1977), also falling into the general third century date of the assemblage. The Lower Nene Valley sherds, however, could not be dated any more precisely than A.D. 240-400, but according to Mrs Hartley, they are more likely to be of third century date (Mrs Hartley pers.comm., for forms see Upex 2008, Illustration 18 and Tyers 1996, 126). The few sherds of Catterick area fabric have been dated to either the second century (A.D. 140-180, curved flange, see Figure .a) or the third and fourth centuries (concave flange, see Figure .b).

The imported *mortaria*, i.e. the south west Gaulish, Oise/Somme, Rhineland and the Soller *mortaria*, are earlier, first and second century A.D. Only the two sherds from Gaul have been dated to the first century, and to the Flavian period. For forms see Figure .c-d and Figure 2.

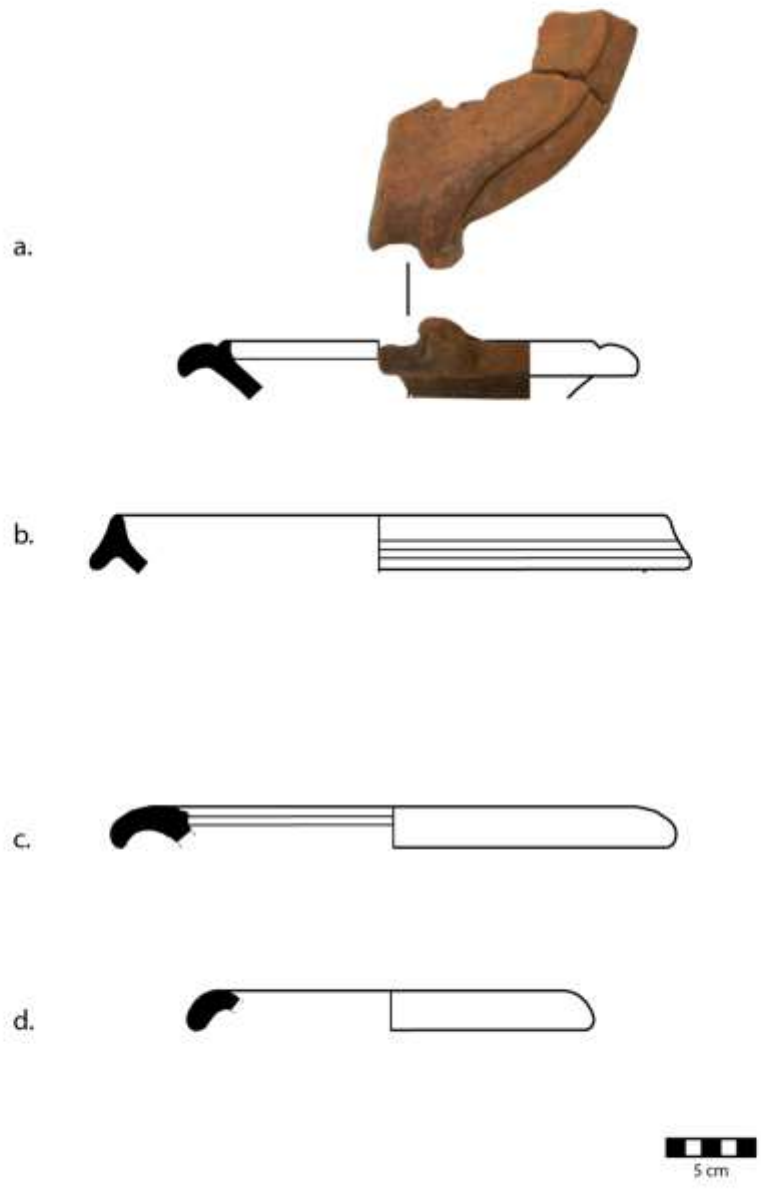
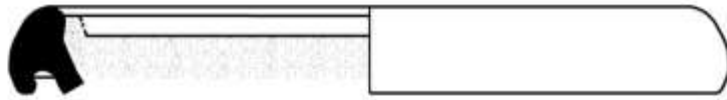


Figure 8: Drawings of Catterick (a-b), and Oise/Somme (c-d) *mortaria*, scale 1:4 (Source: Author)

a.



b.



Figure 2: Drawings of Rhineland (a) and Soller (b) *mortaria*, scale 1:4 (Source: Author)



Discussion

As it can be seen from the quantification, the assemblage is dominated by white wares, such as Mancetter-Hartshill, Lower Nene Valley and Oxfordshire white ware *mortaria*. It must be noted, that although there is only one sherd of a Soller *mortarium*, its enormous size over-represents it in quantification by weight (19.23 percent - see Table 1 and Figure). It is a whole spout weighing more than 2kg, and has a diameter of 60cm (see Figure , Figure 2.b and note on Verecundus 2 above), whereas the average diameter for the rest of the assemblage is 31cm. On the other hand, there is a general lack of red wares, especially of local products: only being represented by the five Catterick area sherds and the single sherd from south west Gaul – there were no Piercebridge *mortaria*, but this is probably due to the date of the assemblage (see below). The abundance of white, and the lack of red wares, is probably due to their different visibility under water, but the possibility of sherds being disintegrated in or washed away by the river must also be taken into consideration.

The abundance of Mancetter-Hartshill *mortaria* can also be seen in the Piercebridge excavations assemblage: Mancetter-Hartshill provided 39.3 percent of the whole *mortarium* assemblage (Evans and Mills 2008, 200); and in the period of A.D. 150-250 85.8 percent, in the period of AD 250-350 it was significantly less (31.7 percent), but still the most common type (*ibid.* Tables 9.10 and 9.13 – see Figure and Figure below).

**MNV% of total
150-250 AD**

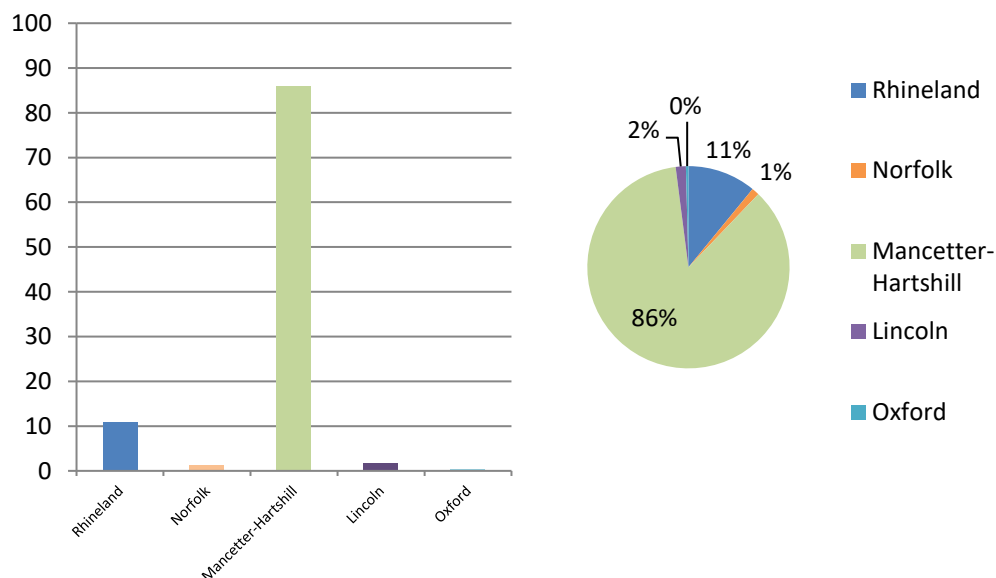


Figure 10: MNV% of total per fabric in the Piercebridge excavations assemblage, period A.D. 150-250 (after Evans and Mills 2008: Table 9.10)

**MNV% per fabric
250-350 AD**

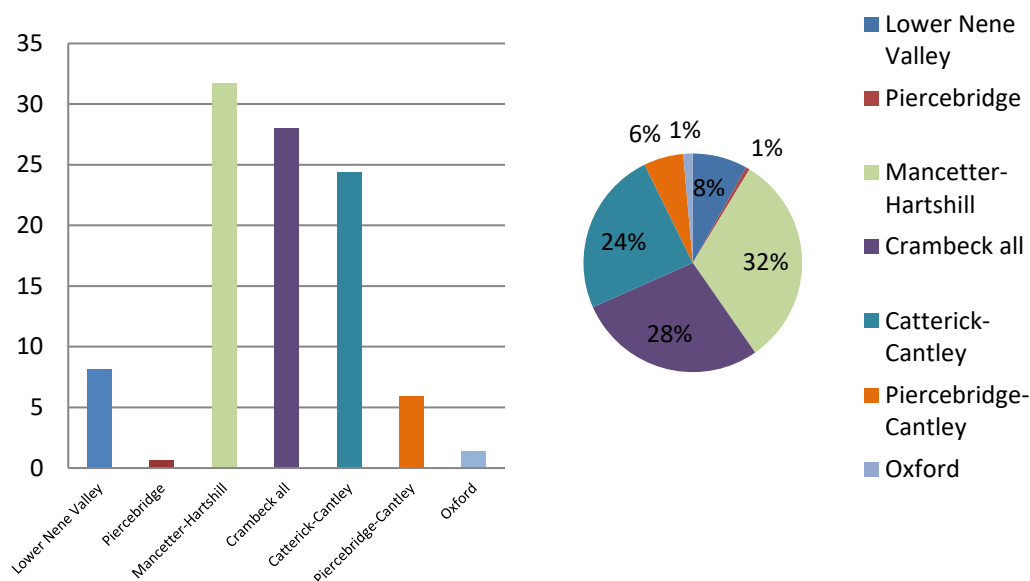


Figure 11: MNV% of total per fabric in the Piercebridge excavations assemblage, period 250-350 AD (after Evans and Mills 2008: Table 9.13)

The general date of the assemblage is the third century, with very few exceptions – mainly the imported *mortaria*. The absence of fourth century forms, especially of Crambeck *mortaria*, is curious, but it is consistent with the rest of the coarse pottery assemblage, which is also of mainly third century date with very few fourth century sherds (J. Gerrard pers.comm.). This pattern can also be seen in the coin assemblage from the river, where coin loss pattern declines after Reece period 13 (A.D. 260-75) (Walton 2008: 288-289); and also the small finds assemblage, which also seems to date mainly to the second and third centuries, and fourth century military equipment is absent (*ibid.* 291). On the other hand Crambeck *mortaria* were abundant in the period A.D. 250-350 in the Piercebridge excavation assemblage (see Figure).

Another aspect of the assemblage must be considered: its deposition in the river. The *mortarium* assemblage was probably deposited over time, not at the same time. The signs of heavy use-wear, burning, and the riveted sherd suggest that the assemblage was domestic, and that the vessels were discarded at the end of their use-life, which is also characteristic of the *Terra Sigillata* vessels recovered from the river (J. Mills pers.comm.), and the river was only a means of disposal. There are no indications that

the *mortarium* assemblage is ritual or votive in function, either in the composition of the assemblage, or any other characteristics measured in this report.

Fabric descriptions

Mancetter-Hartshill - MAH WH:

Both early and late with red and/or black gritting.

See Tomber and Dore 1998: 188-189 and Tyers 1996: 123-124.

Lower Nene Valley - LNV WH:

See Tomber and Dore 1998: 118-119 and Tyers 1996: 127-129.

Oxford white ware – OXF WH:

See Tomber and Dore 1998: 174 and Tyers 1996: 129.

Catterick area:

Hard fabric, with dark grey core and orange-red margin and cream slipped surface, which is discoloured to dark grey, probably due to the water. The surface feels harsh, and the fabric fractures roughly. Inclusions are abundant, ill-sorted, rounded to angular, very fine to medium, red, quartz and mica. Grits are very coarse (2mm+), angular, and black-brown in colour.

Similar to Catterick fabric MB16 (Hartley 2002: 358).

SW Gaul:

A soft, brick red fabric with orange surface, probably slightly discoloured due to the water. The surface feels smooth and powdery; the fracture is irregular. Inclusions are abundant, ill-sorted, fine to very coarse in size, rounded to angular, and in colour brown, black, white, quartz and mica. Grits are up to 3mm in size, red, black and white in colour (probably quartz). Grits can be seen on the bead of the rim and the flange.

Rhineland – RHL WH:

A hard, cream/off-white fabric with self-coloured slip slightly discoloured, probably due to the water. The surface feels smooth and powdery; the fracture is irregular, slightly laminated. Inclusions are abundant, ill-sorted, fine to coarse in size, and rounded to sub-angular in shape, mainly quartz and some red-coloured particles. Grits are abundant and fine to medium in size. The broken bead shows gritting underneath the folded rim.

Also see Tomber and Dore 1998: 78.

Oise/Somme:

The flange-fragment in this fabric is in a very bad condition, almost disintegrating to the touch, due to the water. The surface feels smooth and powdery; the fracture is irregular. The fabric is light creamy orange, with abundant inclusions and voids, which are ill-sorted, very fine to fine in size, rounded to angular in shape, and white, black and red in colour. No gritted surface survives.

Soller, Kreis Düren – SOL WH:

A *Verecundus 2 mortarium* with zoomorphic spout.

See Tomber and Dore 1998: 79, Tyers 1996: 131, and Haupt 1984: 440-441 and Tafel 178.4.

Indeterminate:

A hard, light orange fabric with grey surface probably discoloured in the water. The surface feels smooth and powdery; the fracture is fine irregular. Inclusions are abundant, ill-sorted, fine to medium in size, and rounded to sub-angular in shape. They are mainly quartz and mica, with a few red particles. No gritted surface survives.

Catalogue

Temp. No.	Fabric	Date	Base sh.	Body sh.	Rim sh.	Spout?	Weight (g)	Diameter (cm)	EVE	Notes
1	MAH WH	3rd century			1	N	101.5	36	0.1	4-reeded flange
2	MAH WH	3rd century			1	Y	52.6	32	0.09	4-reeded flange
3	MAH WH	230-330	1			N	497.1			gritting forms a spiral
4	MAH WH	first half of 4th			1	N	96.6	30	0.13	4-reeded flange
5	MAH WH	140-220			1	N	167	32	0.17	joins 6; triple reeded, wide central reed, heavily worn, gritting odd for form
6	MAH WH	140-220			1	N	39.4	32		joins 5
7	MAH WH	230-300			1	N	102.4	30	0.16	discoloured
8	MAH WH	250-330			1	N	91.7	28	0.13	burnt; same fabric as 7, but not the same pot
9	LNV WH	240-400			1	Y	71.6	30	0.1	
10	LNV WH	240-400			1	Y	178.1	36	0.18	
11	LNV WH	240-400			1	N	89.4	28	0.2	
12	MAH WH	180-230			1	N	112.8	32	0.14	
14	Catterick area	140-180			1	N	29.6	26	0.2	joins 18
15	Catterick area	late 3rd or 4th			1	N	51.4	34	0.08	same fabric as 16
16	Catterick area	late 3rd or 4th			1	N	39.1	25	0.06	joins 17, same fabric as 15
17	Catterick area	late 3rd or 4th		1		N				joins 16, recorded together
18	Catterick area	140-180			1	Y	114	26		joins 14, EVE recorded together
19	MAH WH	230-330			1	N	236.2	38	0.12	similar to 21
20	OXF WH	240-300			1	Y	268	29	0.31	form M18
21	MAH WH	230-320/330			1	N	212	38	0.13	similar to 19
22	MAH WH	160-200+			1	N	259	34	0.14	heavily worn
23	MAH WH	230-330			1	N	217	30	0.23	multi-reeded flange; upright bead; well worn
24	OXF WH	250-400			1	N	182.4	23	0.14	rim diameter measured; incomplete flange
25	MAH WH	later than 130	1			N	182.2			
26	LNV WH	250-400			1	N	145.5	34	0.17	
27	MAH WH	190-240			1	N	110.7	30	0.15	4-reeded rim
28	MAH WH	230-300			1	N	67.2	25	0.07	rim diameter measured; multi-reeded; burnt
29	MAH WH	200-250			1	N	255.4	26	0.28	4-reeded, burnt after fracture, heavily worn

30	SW Gaul	Flavian			1	N	77.7			flange too fragmentary; Gillam 237
31	MAH WH	after 130		1		N	46			burnt
32	MAH WH	170-200+			1	Y	281.8	38	0.15	red paint on the flange and inside the spout
33	RHL WH		1			N	756.6			
34	LNV WH				1	N	117.9	36	0.1	
35	MAH WH	160-220			1	N	13.1	32	0.04	
36	LNV WH	250-400			1	N	154.1	34	0.15	
37	MAH WH	after 130	1			N	193.4			
38	LNV WH		1			N	141.9			
39	MAH WH	230-300			1	Y	289	30	0.23	
40	MAH WH	170-200+			1	N	54.6	32	0.09	
41	MAH WH	10-240			1	N	93.6	30	0.11	
42	Oise/Somme	65-120			1	N	45.3	32	0.11	
43	MAH WH	140-200			1	N	67.9	29	0.11	
44	RHL WH	150-250			1	N	143.7	38	0.08	bead folded back, gritted underneath
45	MAH WH	190-240			1	Y	80.5	34	0.08	bead goes through spout
46	MAH WH	140-200			1	Y	89.6	30	0.12	
47	OXF WH				1	N	72.9	40	0.1	form M17
48	OXF WH				1	N	23.2	40	0.045	form M17
49	MAH WH	200-250			1	Y	115.9	32	0.11	triple-reeDED with wide central zone
50	MAH WH	190-240			1	N	38	30	0.06	4-reeDED rim
51	LNV WH				1	N	151.6	31	0.09	
52	MAH WH	200-250			1	N	98.5	24	0.21	4-reeDED narrow flange
53	MAH WH	240-330			1	N	110	29	0.12	multi-reeDED concave flange; worn; river silt
54	MAH WH	230-300			1	N	95.6	27	0.16	5-reeDED flange
55	LNV WH			1		N	53.6			
56	LNV WH			1		N	46.2			
57	MAH WH	after 130		1		N	11.4			
58	MAH WH or LNV WH			1		N	67.1			joins 59
59	MAH WH or LNV WH			1		N	8.3			joins 58
60	LNV WH			1		N	70.3			joins 61
61	LNV WH			1		N	29.6			joins 60
62	MAH WH or LNV WH			1		N	46.8			
63	MAH WH		1			N	101.2			
64	LNV WH			1		N	36.1			
65	MAH WH		1			N	106.8			
66	MAH WH	later than 130	1			N	367.1			riveted base

67	MAH WH			1		N	66.5			
68	MAH WH		1			N	130.4			burnt after fracture
69	MAH WH		1			N	69			
70	indeterminate				1	N	78.7	23	0.24	
71	SOL WH				1	Y	2050	60	0.2	whole zoomorphic spout (Haupt 1980: Tafel 178: 4), Verecundus, possible stamp
	TOTAL:				NoSh: 70	Spouts : 11	Weight: 10661.4g		EVE: 6.185	

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