

# The samian from the river at Piercebridge

By Jo Mills

## Introduction

The 385 sherds of samian (8,752g) retrieved from the river is an interesting assemblage, primarily dating from the mid-second to mid-third century A.D. It is in many ways comparable to material from the excavations which the fort at Piercebridge, the 'vicus' and its environs (Ward 2008). The range of production centres and vessel forms represented, and their condition in terms of sherd size, use and repair appears, in the main, typical of other collections of samian of the same date.

## Background

Samian pottery produced in Gaul was imported into Britain from just before the Conquest until barbarian incursions disrupted production c. A.D. 259/260. Throughout the first century and up until about A.D. 110 imports were chiefly from La Graufesenque in southern Gaul. From the beginning of the second century production moving to central Gaul, with samian first arriving from Les Martres-de-Veyre before being replaced by the greater centre of Lezoux during Hadrian's rule. Imports from Lezoux declined significantly towards the end of the second century, probably finally ceasing in the early years of the third. Samian production began in many small centres in eastern Gaul during the Hadrianic period, and small quantities reached Britain. Large-scale imports from eastern Gaul did not begin until about A.D. 160 when production began at Rheinzabern with lesser quantities arriving from the Trier workshops. These supplies declined towards the middle of the third century. This background is important when interpreting and dating samian collections. The varying quantity of samian arriving in Britain was first addressed by Marsh (1981) who highlighted the two great peaks of samian supply: in the first century from La Graufesenque and in the Hadrianic - Antonine period chiefly from Lezoux. The apparent hiatus in the early decades of the second century noted on many sites was explained by the end of supply from La Graufesenque; the kilns at Les Martres produced and exported far less samian which is reflected in the archaeological record where comparatively little samian is recorded for the first quarter of the second century. Again at the end of the second century the supply to many sites dwindled, especially those away from the south-east and the military zone of northern Britain, which received the bulk of

east Gaulish samian. The kilns of Rheinzabern and Trier could not supply the same quantity of vessels produced by the Lezoux workshops at their height.

Fabric Code	Quantification <sup>1</sup>								Mean Sherd Weight (g)
	Count	%	Wt	%	RIM EVES	%	MVN	% MVN	
SAMLG	1	0.25	3	n/a	0		1	0.3	3g
SAMCG	306	80	6403	73	12.68	75	247	81	21g
SAMLA	1	0.25	27	0.3	0	0	1	0.3	27g
SAMRZ	52	13	1616	18.5	3.16	19	41	13	31g
SAMTR	17	4.5	539	6	0.48	3	13	4	31g
SAMEG	2	0.5	19	0.2	0.10	0.5	2	0.6	9g
SAM	6	1.5	145	1.7	0.45	2.5	1	0.3	24g
<b>Totals</b>	<b>385</b>		<b>8752</b>		<b>16.87</b>		<b>306</b>		<b>23g</b>

**Table 1:** Summary of Samian Quantification by Fabric (Production Area)

The Fabric Codes : SAMLG (La Graufesenque); SAMCG (Lezoux, Central Gaul), SAMLA (Lavoye, Argonne, East Gaul)

SAMRZ (Rheinzabern, East Gaul) SAMTR (Trier, East Gaul) SAMEG (East Gaul - unspecified), SAM (samian - unspecified)

## The assemblage from the river

The material studied here was retrieved from the river bed. The conditions of recovery as well as the action of the river itself may have added bias to the composition of the assemblage. It seems probable that small sherds would travel furthest downstream, and it is equally likely that larger sherds and, for example, decorated sherds, may have been preferentially selected by the divers. Individual sherds range in weight between 1g and c. 200g; the mean for the collection is c.23g. In the writers' experience excavations in rural areas and small towns usually produce samian of a mean sherd weight of c.5 - 15g whilst major urban sites, for example London and Southwark, tend to yield a larger sherd size of c.20-25g. There might be a bias introduced into large urban assemblages where often only samian from Roman deposits is quantified and published, omitting the more degraded sherds from later deposits, a factor which would lower the mean sherd weight an assemblage. The mean sherd weight of 23g is therefore at the higher end of the range usually recorded and tends to support the hypothesis that this assemblage may be subject to bias in selection. A further factor to consider is the sherd size when deposited in the river. This is considered further below. It is interesting to note that the degree of abrasion is very variable, but in general few sherds appeared to be very rolled or battered, perhaps indicating that water action has played little or no part in reducing shed size post-deposition.

<sup>1</sup> The archive record records the material by count, weight (g), rim and base EVE. Sherds considered to belong to the same vessel are recorded together. In order to facilitate comparison with published collections the sherds identified to specific vessel forms are also quantified by Maximum Vessel Number (MVN) (see Table 2). This method of quantification is not as accurate or repeatable as EVE, but is often used for samian because the standardization employed in its production allows identification with high level of confidence.

## The character of the samian assemblage

The samian recovered from the River Tees at Piercebridge amounts to 385 sherds (8752g, 16.87 rim EVEs); a single sherd of first-century date from La Graufesenque was identified. The vast majority, 80 percent of sherds were from central Gaul, most likely all from Lezoux, with 18 percent from east Gaul (see Table 1). All of the east Gaulish material dates to the late second to mid-third century. No east Gaulish vessels of Hadrianic or early Antonine production were identified. The range of vessel forms (see Table 2) suggests that the assemblage dates largely from the later second century to the mid-third, a period of about 100 years. The presence of the single sherd from southern Gaul and a handful of forms which are thought to have ceased in production around A.D. 160 such as Dr 18/31 and the rouletted variant 18/31R, along with the absence of the early cup Dr 27 gives a background level of material produced in the first century and the first half of the second. There are six vessels categorised as Dr 18/31 or Dr 31, and a substantial number as Dr 18/31R or Dr 31R. These are mostly rim sherds and differentiation is almost impossible. It is likely that the majority belong to the later forms; the diagnostic sherds give the ratio of earlier to later forms (18/31 + 18/31R: 31 + 31R) of c.1:12. The predominance of samian dating to the second half of the second century is confirmed by examination of the closely-dated vessels – the decorated and stamped wares. The plot (Figure 1) of samian loss in five year intervals for these vessels peaks at c. A.D. 170 and significantly 86 percent of this group falls in the second half of the second century. There is a long tail to the distribution, accounting for about 8 percent of the closely dated vessels, showing the low but constant level of samian supply up to the mid- third century when imports ceased.

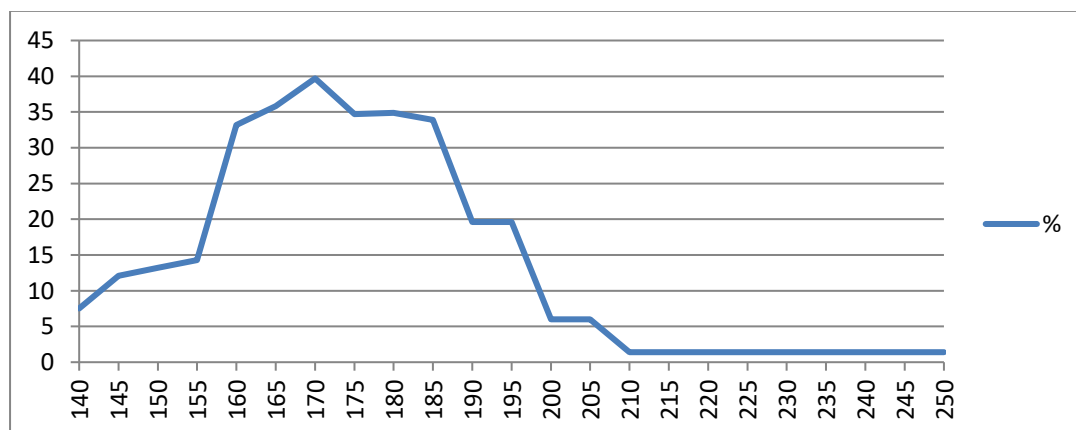


Fig 1: Percentage of stamped and decorated vessels discarded shown in 5 year intervals

The vast majority of the vessel forms are those commonly found on sites occupied in the later second and early third centuries A.D. A number of forms were introduced into the samian repertoire around A.D. 160/170, at the same time imports from Rheinzabern and Trier became established. The newly introduced forms including Drag 31R bowls, dish and cup sets Walters 79/79R and 80 and mortaria were manufactured in central and east Gaulish kilns. Other forms were introduced in eastern Gaul, including jars and beakers, mortaria and various bowl forms, often with exuberant decoration *en barbotine*. The forms from Lezoux identified here which date to the later part of the second century include Dr 31R, cup Walters 80 and dishes Walters 79 and 79R, Curle 21, Dr 45 and a flagon. Vessels from east Gaul include: bowls Lud Sb (Dr 31R) and Lud SMb/c, dish and cup set Dr 32 and Dr 40, gritted mortaria Dr 43 and Dr 45, dish forms Lud Sa (Dr 31) and Massenfund 8b (Huld-Zetsche 1971, fig 10), and up to 6 closed forms (jars and beakers) including two or three Dr 54's. Added to these are vessels with a longer currency such as Dr 31, Dr 38, Dr 37, Dr 30 and Dr 33 of which a large number were recovered. The decorated vessels include late Lezoux potters Casurius (5), Doeccus (3), Ivstus (2), Ivlinus (2), Paternus II (9), and Banvus (2); in addition, one vessel attributed to Tocca of Lavoye was identified and two Comitialis bowls from Rheinzabern. Approximately 18 percent of sherds (25 percent by weight and 22 percent by EVE) were from kiln sites in eastern Gaul. The proportion is higher than the 10 percent which is usually suggested as the norm for British sites; however, for a site in the northern military zone this is not an exceptionally high figure. The Rheinzabern vessels out-number those from Trier; it is usual for about 30 percent of the samian from eastern Gaul in an excavated group to be from Trier; here the quantity is slightly lower at 25 percent.

The condition of the sherds was variable; many were blackened and had an almost tar-like deposit in places. 28 sherds (c.7 percent) were noted as burnt, five heavily so; and a further nineteen sherds warranted a note of 'black deposits' in the record, two of these also had ferruginous encrustations. The samian from excavations in Piercebridge (Ward 2008) seems to have had a consistently high proportion of burnt sherds (commonly 10-20 percent) and these blackened sherds may also have been burnt prior to deposition in the river. The nature of the tar-like deposits on the sherds is perhaps a matter for future research for in many cases it had a similar appearance to (birch bark) glue which has been recorded on samian and Roman coarse-ware vessels (Brown and Seager-Smith 2012). Abrasion caused by immersion in the river is unsurprisingly most evident on sherds from vessels made from the least well-fired fabrics. Although broken edges appear smoothed or softened the effect of the water doesn't appear to be marked, furthermore immersion had caused no change to the composition or colour of the fabrics. Only 14 sherds (4 percent) were noted as being particularly abraded.

## Summary by Vessel Form

FORM	FABRIC ( Production Centre)				
	SAMCG	SAMRZ	SAMTR	SAME G	SAM
dish	4.76	0.65	0.13		
dec bowl	1.34	0.58			0.08
cup	5.34	0.97	0.07	0.1	
plain bowl	0.44	0.27	0.28		
mort	0.31	0.33			
closed		0.25			
no ID	0.49	0.11			0.37
TOTAL	12.68	3.16	0.48	0.1	0.45

Table 2: Summary of samian by vessel form and fabric measured by rim EVE (total 16.87)

**Cups:** A maximum of 66 cups were recorded (6.48 rim EVEs), the majority (60) are form Dr 33, the rest are Dr 35 (2), Walters 80 (2), and single examples of Dr 40 and O&P LV, 13. Ten cups are stamped, all from Lezoux. There are a few heavily worn sherds, a few are burnt, and none have been repaired. The O&PLV, 13 (ID no 7; CG) is a very heavy, thick-walled example with Atilianus stamp in a circular cartouche with a central 8-petaled rosette.

**Dishes:** The maximum number of dish forms is 86 (5.54 rim EVEs). A single vessel from South Gaul was identified, of probable Flavian-Trajanic date. The small rim sherd is from a dish transitional between Dr 18 and Dr 18/31. The most common dish form is Dr 31/Lud Sa (31), only one potters' stamp survives. Other dish forms include 18/31 (4) and 18/31R (2), Curle 15 (4 or 5), Walters 79 (3) and 79R (1), Dr 36 (3) and a very late dish from Trier Massenfund form 8b. Many sherds belong dishes and bowls of the 18/31 series but could not be assigned to one or other of the forms. The Lezoux sherds of form Curle 15 are small body sherds, and the single Rheinzabern example is a larger rim sherd. One of the Dr 79's from Lezoux is a very late example, the fabric is pale and the slip thin, and the foot-ring is straight rather than the usual curving and bulbous profile (ID6). One vessel is a hybrid between cup Dr 35 and dish Dr 36 (ID12), this vessel is essentially a small, deep dish. The barbotine decoration is also slightly unusual having a tendril from either end of each leaf. Stamped dish forms include single examples of Dr 18/31 (SAMCG), Lud Sa (SAMTR) and Dr 36 (SAMRZ). Two

sherds (an ancient break?) comprise >50 percent of the Dr36, a graffito of two letters was recorded on the inside of this dish (see below).

**Plain bowls:** Plain bowls rarely form a large proportion of samian assemblages; here the maximum recorded is 50 (0.99 rim EVEs). Flanged bowl form Dr 38 is poorly represented; four substantial flanged body sherds in Lezoux fabric (all >20g) and a single Rheinzabern flange sherd were recorded. One of the Lezoux sherds appears to have had the flange cut off and smoothed down (see re-use and alterations below). The only rim is beaded. For a late group this seems a low number of this form, and only one (burnt) Lezoux sherd is in a late second-century fabric. Form Dr 31R (Lud Sb in East Gaul), the final development of the 18-31 series of dishes is a deep open bowl-like vessel<sup>2</sup> and is included here as a bowl. There are 29 Central Gaulish examples of this form and 18 Lud Sb produced in eastern Gaul (13 from Rheinzabern and five from Trier). Only two are stamped.

**Mortaria:** Gritted mortaria of forms Dr 43 and 45 are both represented in this group with examples from Lezoux (Dr 45), Rheinzabern (Dr 45 and Dr 43) and Trier (Dr 45). Of the three Dr 43 sherds, almost certainly from three different vessels, two are flanges decorated *en barbotine*. The largest of these (ID 38) is ornamented with large cordite leaves and tendrils. Scored marks are evident on two of the Lezoux vessels indicating that the vessels broke close to the applied (lion head) spout, but no spouts were recovered. Less than 4 percent (measured by rim EVE) of the vessels are mortaria although the value rises to 7.5 percent when quantified by MVN. Either figure suggests slightly more mortaria are present than in the average site collection. The excavations across Piercebridge have often produced elevated quantities of mortaria, as high as 13 percent (by MVN) from the outer fort ditch and 9 percent from the North 'vicus' at

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<sup>2</sup> **A note on form Drag 31R/Lud Sb:** After about A.D. 165 a new form entered the samian repertoire, a wide, dish/bowl with a rouletted ring in the kicked base and an internal step at the change of angle from base to wall. This vessel is the final evolution in the series of dishes which started in southern Gaul as a shallow dish form Drag 18 with a larger rouletted version Drag18R. The form continued in production in eastern Gaul, both at Rheinzabern and Trier until the mid C3rd. Classified by Ludowici as form Sb, the internal step and rouletting are often absent. To me the form has a 'bowl-like' appearance, being deep and wide; however, measurement of vessels with a complete profile often gives height and rim diameter measurements which are within the range of 'dish' (The formula gives the parameters of vessel height  $\leq 1/3$  but  $\geq 1/7$  rim diameter Orton 1982, 33-6). Some examples from this site are by this formula 'dishes' and others are 'bowls' (vessel height  $> 1/3$  but not  $>$  rim diameter). Willis (2005, 8.2), in his study of samian classifies form 31R/Lud Sb as bowls in all of his site comparisons as does Webster (1996, fig 11) despite the drawing of the type (presumably to scale) technically falling within the range of a 'dish'. The use of the terms dish, bowl etc does not infer how the vessels were used, but merely describes classes of vessels in a manner that allows comparison across and between sites.

Tofts Field '73. A single Central Gaulish un-gritted mortaria (form Curle 21) was recorded.

**Closed vessels:** A small group of sherds from closed vessels was recovered. The examples from Lezoux are two sherds, probably from two different Déchelette 72 jars with cut-glass decoration and the base of what is probably a disc-mouthed flagon (ID11). All belong to the second half of the second century A.D. The flagon is an uncommon samian form, only the lower part of this vessel was recovered, but the moulding around the foot-ring is so similar to that on Dr 45 mortaria from Lezoux that it seems likely that it is of a similar date (c. A.D. 170-210). Another three vessels in Rheinzabern fabrics (IDs 260, 261, 273) are all probably variants of form Dr 54 and are likely to date to the first half of the third century; one has a scrap of barbotine decoration. A single sherd in a pale Trier fabric from a cut glass decorated jar is also early- mid third century in date.

**Decorated Forms:** The mould-decorated bowls (Dr 30 and Dr 37) account for 11.8 percent of the assemblage when measured by rim EVE (24 percent by MVN). The majority of the decorated vessels are Dr 37s from Lezoux (56 max). Of the 32 vessels identified to a potter or potter's style, 25 or 26 are dated to A.D. 160 or later. Just three mid-second century potters are represented: Laxtucissa (2), Albucius (2) and Cinnamus (2). The later Lezoux potters include Banvus (2), Casurius (5), Doeccus (3), Ivllinus (2), Ivstus (2), and Paternus II (8 or 9). Potters from eastern Gaul include Tocca of Lavoye (1) and Comitialis of Rheinzabern (2). None of the mould-decorated vessels are third-century in date; the date ranges for Banvus and Comitialis go into the early third century and appear to be the latest examples. Single examples of large 'advert' mould stamps of Cinnamus and Paternus v (II) of Lezoux were recorded, and two of the Rheinzabern 37's had narrow stamps within the decoration; one was indecipherable due to a combination of abrasion and poor moulding; the other was stamped by two potters: Comitialis in combination with REP\_ . This combination is evidence of one of several recorded for Comitialis (Ricken – Thomas 2005, taf. 85, 1, 3, 5, taf. 87, 3, 12, 13; taf. 88, 15; taf. 89, 1, 4, 12, for example).

Other types of decoration are incised or cut glass decoration, found most often on jar forms, and slip-trailed decoration (*en barbotine*) used on forms Dr 35, Dr 36, Dr 42, and Curle 11 from the first century A.D., and was later used to great effect at

Rheinzabern, and to a lesser extent at Trier, on a variety of forms (cf. mortaria and closed vessels). A single rim sherd from a Trier bowl of form Lud SMb/c with a scrap of trailed decoration below the upper cordon was also recovered and dates to the third century (ID263).

## Catalogue of decorated Samian

*Cinnamus ii* Two non-joining body sherds apparently from the same bowl; one with an incomplete Cinnamus mould stamp at the base of the decorated zone. The panelled decoration includes large double-bordered medallions and dolphin stand Rogers Q58. A.D. 145-175 ID 318 & 319

*Cinnamus ii-style* Sherd with ovolo Rogers B231 with a bead row below. The only figure is perhaps a pair of deer's ears. Mid-Antonine. ID 317

*Banvus* Body sherd with ovolo Rogers B157 used exclusively by Banvus. The decoration includes vase (Rogers T13), a vertical beaded divider with a terminal rosette which ends below the ovolo, and a double-bordered medallion. All the elements are on a bowl from Exeter with Banvus' mould stamp (<http://www.rgzm.de/samian/home/frames.htm>, 0010392) A.D. 170-210 ID328

*Banvus* Body sherd with ovolo Rogers B153 with indistinct bead row below. A single-bordered festoon with a large spikey rosette (Rogers C241) within is comparable with that on a bowl from Lezoux (S&S pl.104, 8). A.D. 170-210 ID341

*Casurius* Body sherd from a relatively small Dr 30 (decorated zone c. 50mm high). The ovolo (Rogers B176) has a row of large beads below. The vertical panels are divided using the same bead rows with a larger bead at each end. The panels (from L to R) contain gadroons Rogers U151; leaf Rogers J40 balanced on sprig-like motif similar to the top of Rogers motif U295 which is the motif in the next panel; small triple-bordered medallion containing leaflet Rogers G259, with another figure or motif below it; this one is very worn, but may be a mask; the last panel contains the gadroon again and suggests a repeating pattern around the bowl. This bowl is small and simple and contains many of the motifs characteristically used in Casurius' designs. A.D. 160-90 ID 305

*Casurius* Scrap with ovolo Rogers B176 with row of large beads below and head of an unidentified figure. A.D. 160-190. ID 347

*Casurius* Sherd from bottom of panelled decoration with dividers of large beads with a larger bead at the ends of the rows. The only extant figure is Lion O.1403A in a small panel between narrow panels of small rings. The lion was used by several potters including Casurius and Doeccus who also used the large beads. The small



rings are on a bowl with one of Casurius' ovolos (S&S pl 136, 48). A.D. 160-190 ID 339

*Casurius* Scrap with ovolo Rogers B223 with row of large beads below. Burnt. A.D. 160-190. ID351

*Casurius?* Sherd from a Dr 37, only a scrap of ovolo with large, squashed beads below, remains. The figures include ox O.1886, which is listed as having been used by Casurius, Servus III and P-18; with a small dog running to the left below. Casurius and Servus III had several figure types in common; however, it is possible that the ovolo on this sherd is Rogers B223 which Casurius used, and the beads are more like his. A.D. 160-90 ID 335

*Doeccus* Body sherd from bowl in Doeccus' style with panels divide by rows of large rounded beads. Venus (O.331) stands in a narrow panel between one with a large medallion and to the right a festoon with leaf Rogers H110 below it and another large medallion panel top the right of them. Large 8-petalled rosette (Rogers C167) flanks the medallions and one is impressed below the figure. A.D. 165-200 ID307

*Doeccus* Small body sherd with a medium-sized double-bordered medallion containing leaf Rogers H110 with mask O.1214 below the medallion. A.D. 165-200 ID327

*Doeccus* Body sherd from Dr 30; the finish seems very matt, but this is probably post-depositional. Only a scrap of the ovolo remains, but looks like that used by Doeccus. The design includes two shallow, double-bordered festoons, apparently flanked by the rosette-in-ring motif (Rogers C99) with a striated pillar with tiny foliate capital between. The pillar is on a bowl stamped by Doeccus from Richborough (Bushe-Fox 1928, pl XXVIII, 2 and 2a) and the roundels on a stamped Dr 30 from Silchester (May 1916, pl.XXVI, 47). A small crouching lion or sphinx inhabits one of the festoons. A.D. 165-200. ID 306

*Iullinus* Large base sherd from a bowl with some internal wear. The decoration (Illustrate?) includes several motifs characteristic of Iullinus' vessels. The decoration is panelled, the panels divided with blocky beads. The design seems to repeat: a vertical panel containing vase Rogers T5 atop a lozenge, probably Roger U15; followed by two panels with small double-bordered medallions each with a small panel below one containing paired acorns (Rogers U87), the other paired leaves (Rogers J156). The vase panel is then repeated. The medallions contain small animals, possibly goat O.1836 (not previously listed for this potter), and a sitting hare (O.2116). The beads, vase, hare and leaf are all on a bowl with Iullinus' mould stamp from Leicester (S&S pl126, 11). A.D. 170-200 ID 320

*Laxtucissa* Body sherd with fragment of ovolo Rogers B206 with astragalus border below (A10). The astragalus also divides the pot into panels: a Saltire containing leaves Rogers G88 and G159, and a panel containing vine scroll Rogers M4. The

ovolo, border, scroll and small leaf were all used by Censorinus, Paternus II and Laxtucissa, the large leaf (G88) was used by a different range of potters: Avitus, Vegetus, X-5 and Laxtucissa. A.D. 145-70 ID310

*Laxtucissa* Body sherd with ovolo B206 with fine beaded border. The fragment of panelled design includes leaflet Rogers J162. Leaflet and ovolo were both used by potters of the Quintillianus group, and Laxtucissa who also used the beads. A.D. 145-70 ID314

*Laxtucissa et al* Dr 30 or 37 only ovolo Rogers B105 with astragalus border A10 below. These two motifs were used in combination by Laxtucissa, Censorinus, Lastuca, Mammius and Paternus II. Mid-Late Antonine. ID311

*Mercator II or Iullinus* Rim sherd with ovolo B156 (used by Mercator and Iullinus) with wavy border below. The panels are divided by bead rows. From the left they include a large medallion containing Victory O.809 with small figure D553 (S&S fig 43, 7) to her right. Iullinus used O.809 whilst O.812 is listed for Mercator (Rogers 1999, fig 73, 9). The medallion is flanked top and bottom with plain rings. The upper panel to the right holds a single-bordered festoon (S&S 1990 fig 146, 10) containing a bear with a plain ring below the bear and rosette C171 below the festoon. The bear is not in Oswald. It is similar to O.1588 which Mercator (and several other potters, but not Iullinus) used, but the front paws do not cross. The rear end of a bear on Rogers 199 fig 73, 12, could be the same figure type. The lower panel contains a repeat impression of the bear. Other sherds have second examples of Victory in a medallion and the panel with the bears and festoon. Repetition of figure types, especially animals is a feature of many pots attributed to Mercator (Rogers 1999, fig 73, 9). A.D. 160-200 ID 321 ILLUSTRATE?

*Censorinus* Body sherd with ovolo Roger B206 with fine beads below; the panels are also separated with bead rows; these end short of the ovolo row and have rosette Rogers C123 at the terminals. The only figure is seated Venus O.334 and there is a plain ring in a second panel. The combination of rosette, ovolo and seated Venus suggest this is the work of either Censorinus or Mercator. The small beads are unusual for both potters, Mercator favoured cabled and wavy borders and Censorinus preferred an astragalus border but used beads below a different ovolo on a stamped bowl from Brough (<http://www.rgzm.de/samian/home/frames.htm>, 0010660). The rosette atop vertical beads is on another bowl stamped by Censroinus (S&S pl 102, 11). A.D.150-80 ID 348

*Albucius* Large sherd with ovolo Rogers B105 with bead row below and beaded vertical dividers. The surviving panel holds a large double-bordered medallion containing Pudicitia (O.926) facing Perseus (O.191). Two beaded rings (Rogers E58) flank the medallion. The ovolo, medallion, beads and rings are all on a bowl attributed to Albucius from Corbridge (S&S 1990 pl. 121, 13; Pudicitia in a medallion with a

second figure is on a stamped fragment from London (S&S pl.121, 14). A.D. 140-70  
ID 322

*Albucius ?* Drag 30 body sherd with narrow vertical panel enclosing motif Q.77 and  
dancer O.343. Both motif and figure are known from bowls stamped by Albucius.  
Burnt. A.D.140-70. ID 349

*Albucius or Paternus II* Body sherd with ovolo Rogers B106 with row of fine beads  
below; above a medallion or scroll. The ovolo was used by Paternus II and Albucius?  
A.D. 140-90 ID 342

*Paternus II* Drag 37 with Paternus's ovolo Rogers B178 with bead row below. The  
decoration is part of a scroll inhabited with a medallion Rogers E18 containing cherub  
O.440. A.D. 160-90 ID309

*Paternus II* Sherd from a panelled bowl in a style which was much repeated using  
different combinations of figures. Here a single-bordered festoon contains sphinx  
O.858 and the figure in a long narrow panel is Mercury (either O.537 or O.538). To the  
right of the figure the vertical divider is topped with a leaf, in this case probably Rogers  
J.199). A.D. 160-90. ID 325

*Paternus II* Two non-joining sherds from the lower part of a Dr 37, one with part of  
Paternus' mould-stamp 7a. The design is panelled with caballed dividers, large beads  
at the panel junctions and a squat astragalus in each corner. Motifs include small,  
single-bordered medallions perhaps containing leaves or masks, none is complete  
enough to identify; a festoon containing dolphin O.2392. A.D. 160-90 ID 323 & 324

*Paternus II* Sherd with ovolo Rogers B178 with bead row below. The surviving  
decoration includes a fragment of a winding scroll inhabited by a peacock O.2365.  
This ovolo was used exclusively by Paternus. A.D. 160-90 ID308 (could be same pot  
as 309)

*Paternus II* Scrap of ovolo Rogers B181 with fine beads below. A.D. 160-190 ID 333

*Paternus style* Rim sherd with ovolo Rogers B138 above a bead row. The ovolo was  
used by Laxtucissa, Censorinus and Paternus II. The combination of ovolo and bead  
row suggests this is most likely to be attributed to Paternus. Mid-late Antonine ID 315

*Paternus II style* Joining sherds with ovolo Rogers B105 above row of fine beads and  
a scroll. The ovolo was used by several potters including Albucius, Laxtucissa,  
Ianarius II and Paternus II. Mid-late Antonine ID 312

*Paternus II?* Scrap with leaf Rogers 208 hanging from a short tendril in a panel corner  
with a plain ring above. The leaf was used by several potters, Quintillianus,  
Laxtucissa, Censorinus, Ivstvs, Mammius and Paternus II. Mid-Late Antonine ID332

*Paternus II?* A worn sherd with traces of a large ovolo, probably Rogers B178. A.D.  
160-90 ID 345

*Ivstus* Body sherd with cabled divider with small ring at terminal. Bead-edged lozenge Rogers U32 in corner of panel filling gap above double-bordered medallion containing panther O.1537. It is probably just the head and shoulders of the panther as on a mould-stamped bowl in Rennes museum (<http://www.rgzm.de/samian/home/frames.htm>, 0011800) A.D. 160-200 ID 330

*Ivstus* or *Paternus II?* Body sherd with cabled divider with small ring at terminal. The only figure type is dolphin O.2393 AD160-200 ID326

*Ivstus* or *Paternus II* Scrap of Drag 30 with ovolo Rogers B234 used by *Ivstus* and *Paternus II*. A.D. 160-200 ID 350

\_\_\_ Body sherd with part of three figures, tree Rogers N4, the edge of which appears to have been over stamped with a horseman with cloak flying, above is possibly a seated hare facing right. This is a very crowded design and it is not clear which workshop might have produced the vessel. The tree was used by a wide variety of potters over a long period - it was used at Les Martres at the beginning of the second century and still in use at the end of the century at the Cintinus workshop. The hare appears to be O.2115, and the horseman perhaps a smaller version of O.249A. Hadrianic or Antonine. ID 287

\_\_\_ Vine leaf fragment. Antonine. ID334

\_\_\_ Very abraded scrap with seated Apollo O.94 which was used by several mid-late Antonine potters (Cinnamus, Carantinus, Iullinus, Paternus II, Servus II, Primanus). ID 346

## **East Gaul**

### **Lavoie**

*Tocca* Sherd from the base of the decoration with a guide-line impressed with a single row of rosettes, the only other motif is the bent twig used by *Tocca*. The twig is on a mould signed TOCCAFIICIT (Chenet et Gaudron 1955, fig. 57, G). This sherd is quite worn and entirely blackened. The internal surface bears a graffito which reads CARVS, the R is possibly ligatured with a T. c. A.D. 160-200 ID 272

### **Rheinzaubern**

'Ware mit Eierstab E25.E26' Large rim sherd with ovolo RF E 25, a fragment of a double-bordered festoon with a beaded astragalus (?RF O 206), and vertical oval beads as panel divider. A double bordered medallion is flanked by leaf P87 on long stalks (Ricken Thomas 2005, taf. 116, 7) in a well-spaced panel. The motifs were all used by a variety of potters, but the potter or group of potters brought together as 'Ware mit Eierstab E25.E26' employed them all. Late second – early third century. ID 265

*Comitalis style III/IV* Large rim sherd with the trophy motif RF O.160 and double medallion RF K20 of Comitalis' style IV, and ovolo E40 and sea-horse T188 of style III. A.D.175-220 ID 266

*Comitalis style IV* Rim of Dr 37 bowl with two stamps in the mould: Comitalis and REP (cf. stamp catalogue nos 4 and 14). The decoration below tongue-less ovolo R-F E66 belongs to the style grouped on Ricken-Thomas 2005 taf. 90, with double-bordered medallions (RF K20) and trophy (RF O160) above leaf RF P46, and with extra birds (RF 249) below the ovolo. The figure type in the medallion (with the REP stamp below it) is crouching leopard (RF T30) which is on another bowl with the REP stamp (Ricken Thomas 2005, taf 90,6). A.D.175-220 ID264

*Comitalis Style V* Body sherd with scuffed external surface; the limited surviving decoration includes a medium-sized double-bordered medallion (RF K19a) with a seated lion T23. To one side is a mould stamp of Latinnus with a small bear (RF T54) below it. A.D. 175-220 ID267

\_\_\_\_\_ A poorly finished sherd with deep grooves truncating the top of the ovolo, no beads below. There is a scrap of a figure which is probably Mercury (RF M79) holding an incomplete (or incompletely impressed) caduceus. Almost no slip remaining on internal surface. Late second – early third century A.D. ID 269

### Samian Potters' Stamps

A total of 24 sherds had at least one letter of a potters' stamp extant, one of these, Dr 37 from Rheinzabern had two different stamps within the decoration. Five of the stamps were too incomplete to be identified. Only one vessel was recorded for each potter; many are new stamps for Piercebridge although they have been recorded previously at sites such as Lincoln, Corbridge, Vindolanda, South Shields, York and Catterick. Stamps of Verus vi are not very common in Britain, Hartley and Dickinson (2012, 213-7) do not list another British example of die 2b; die 2c occurs at Wroxeter and Lancaster, and 3f at Old Penrith and Lancaster. Further, the only example of Verus ii stamping form 36 is a vessel from Trier with die 2c. The identification of Victorinus ii is uncertain; although prolific, few vessels with his stamp are recorded in Britain, most are in London, but there are examples from Carlisle, Lincoln and Brougham (Hartley and Dickinson 2012, 237-48). There is only one other record for die 7c. Stamps for Atilianus i, Marcus v, Martinus iii, Maternianus i, Paterclinus and Paternus v (II) have been recorded previously at Piercebridge. The same dies on the same forms are recorded for Marcus v (3), Maternianus (1) and Paternus v (3); and the same

die is recorded for Martinus iii but on a form Dr31, and Atilianus die 1d is recorded on Dr 33.

The date range for the stamped vessels is similar to that for the decorated wares A.D. 140-250, and the greatest concentration, seven examples, date to the last three or four decades of the second century, following the distribution shown in Fig.1.

## The Catalogue

Each entry gives: potters' name (i, ii etc., where homonyms are involved), die number, vessel form, production centre (fabric code if die not attested at the kiln site). READING, date, [archive record ID number]

**NB you will need Samian5 font installed for the stamp reading glyphs to appear correctly. Your printed will also need Samian 5 if this catalogue is to be published.**

1. Atilianus i, 1a, O&P LV, 13, Lezoux. OF□ATILIANI in a circular cartouche with a central 8-petalled rosette. A stamp which seems to have been used exclusively on Curle 23 and the matching cup, as here. c. A.D. 170-200 [ID 7]
2. Attilus v, 2a, Dr 33, SAMCG. AT□ TILLI□ c. A.D. 160-200 [ID71]
3. Cinnamus ii, 5b, Dr 37, Lezoux. CIN[NA□] ← at the base of the decoration. c. A.D. 145-75 [ID 318 & 319]
4. Comitalis IV, 5a tab, Dr 37, Rheinzabern. COMITI[□□ISF]← Mould stamp within the decoration with REP stamp also on the same bowl (cf stamp no 14). c. A.D. 175-220 [ID 264]
5. Latinnus, 1a tab, Dr 37, Rheinzabern. [□A]T[IN]N[I]← Retrograde mould stamp within the decoration of a bowl decorated in Comitalis V style. The end of the die is characteristically jagged. A.D. 170-240 [ID267]
6. Magio i (Magionus), 1a, Dr 31, Lezoux. □□□CIONI□ in shaped cartouche. c. A.D. 160-200 [ID 123]
7. Malliacus, 3f, Dr 18/31?, SAMCG □LLIACI c. A.D. 140-175 [ID 122]
8. Mansuetus ii, 2a, Dr 33, Lezoux □□□S[V□E□]c ] c.AD160-175 [ID 74]

9. Marcus v, 5a, Dr 33, Lezoux. [ARCI] ← . A base sherd with the foot-ring removed, possibly trimmed around the edge removing all of the wall. The sherd is worn and the stamp difficult to read; however, the high dot at the end of the stamp is very clear. This is not shown in Hartley and Dickinson (2009, 280), however, in discussions with Brenda Dickinson she noted that there are examples of this stamp with faint dots at the beginning and the end although there are far more examples without dots as in the NoTS illustration. A.D. 160-210 [ID 78]
10. Martinus iii, 7a, Dr 33, Lezoux. [RTI] This stamp actually reads [RTI] where the [ ] has not registered completely. c. A.D. 170-200 [75]
11. Maternianus i (Maternnianus), 3a, Dr 33, Lezoux. [IERI] c. A.D. 170-200 [ID 69]
12. Osbimanus, 7a, Dr 33, SAMCG. O[B[I-]] Graffito X on underside of base (post-firing) A.D. 155-185 [ID 73]
13. Paterclinus, 4a, Dr 31R, Lezoux. [P]TERCLINI c. A.D. 150-180 [ID 100]
14. Paternus v, 7a, Dr 37, Lezoux. P[RNI] ← c. A.D. 160-190 [ID 323 & 324]
15. Rep- ii, 1a tab, Dr 37, Rheinzabern. RE[P]← Stamped with the decoration in addition to a mould stamp of Comitalis. (cf. stamp no. 4) c. A.D. 175-220 [ID 264]
16. Saturninus ii, 1b, Dr 33, Lezoux. [SATV]RNNI Foot-ring very little worn. c. A.D. 160-200 [ID72]
17. Venerandus, 5a, Wa 80, Lezoux. [VENERND] c. A.D. 155-185 [ID 2]
18. Verus vi, 2b, Dr 36, Rheinzabern. VERVSFEC c. A.D. 210-250 [ID 258]
19. Victorinus ii, ?7c, ?Lud Sb, SAMRZ. VIC[TORI]VS] The slightly curving base to the initial V is distinctive, however, it is not easy to be certain of the precise die used here as the central kick is quite damaged and the T seems not to have registered at all. Dickinson and Hartley admit that the dies are difficult to identify as the dies 'tended to wander in the middle, when being impressed' (2012, 246). The form is equally uncertain as the sherd is just from the base of the vessel. c. A.D. 210-250 [ID 268]

Incomplete, unidentified stamps:

20. ]M] Dr 33 SAMCG Hadrianic or Antonine [ID76]

21. ]M Dr 33 SAMCG Hadrianic or Antonine [ID 68]
22. ]NI Dr 33 SAMCG Hadrianic or Antonine. Foot-ring very little worn. [ID 67]
23. ]NVS[ with clear serifs. Cup. SAMRZ. Late second-early third century [ ID 281]
24. One letter possibly ]□ or □[, ?SAMTR Dr 31/Lud Sa. Late second to early third century A.D. [ID 250]

## Unusual Forms

### Closed vessel forms:

- 1) Body sherd from the lowest part of the decorated section of a jar or vase with incised decoration with two broad grooves that delineate the decoration. Late second–mid third century A.D. SAMTR. (ID 262)
- 2) Neck of Rheinzabern (SAMRZ) round-bodied jar with a broad plain band or flat cordon at the base of the neck. The only decoration remaining is a vertical ‘wiggle’ of barbotine which is now worn away. Probably first half of third century A.D. (ID261)
- 3) Rim sherd (recently broken and fragment missing) from a wide-mouthed Rheinzabern jar. Probably first half of third century A.D. (ID260)
- 4) The trimmed base of Rheinzabern jar, probably form Dr 54 (see fuller description below) ID273
- 5) Base of a Central Gaulish (SAMCG) flagon similar to the disc-mouthed flagon Oswald & Price (1920, LXXXIII, 2). There is no internal slip, and no decoration on the surviving vessel which stands about 80mm high suggesting it was undecorated. The ornamentation just above the foot-ring, a simple cordon, is similar to that on Drag 45 foot-rings suggesting the flagons are of a similar date c. A.D. 170-200/210. There has been very little wear to the slip on the foot which may indicate that it broke early in its life, or, that it was primarily a display vessel, which is a distinct possibility for uncommon forms like flagons. (ID11)

### Unusual/uncommon bowl forms:

- 6) Ludovici SMb/c rim with the upper cordon and a scrap of a barbotine tendril only surviving. Pale, chalk-rick fabric (SAMTR) with a very thin slip especially internally. Probably third century A.D. ID263
- 7) Dr 37R rim in a pale orange fabric (SAMRZ) with a thin slip which has worn away almost completely externally and over the rim. The rouletted band is c. 35mm deep,



approximately the same depth as the plain collar below the bead rim. Third century A.D., possibly the second quarter of the century (ID288)

- 8) Massenfund 8b, a large rim sherd from this shallow dish form with a prominent cordon about 20mm below the plain rim; the fabric is pale and chalky and the slip very thin. The form was recorded at the Massenfund in Trier (Huld-Zetsche 1971, fig 10, 8b). c. A.D. 220-60 (ID251)
- 9) 35/36 hybrid between cup Dr 35 and dish Dr 36 the vessel is essentially a small, deep dish with a rim diameter of 140mm. The barbotine decoration is unusual having a tendril from either end of each leaf. Late Antonine. (ID12)

## Graffiti

There are three examples of post-firing graffiti, one is a simple 'X' scored on the underside of a cup base (12 below), the other two were scratched on the inside of the vessel. It is extremely unusual for graffiti to be on the inside of vessels; they are usually recorded on the underside of the base (cf. 12) or on the outer wall. All fifteen of the graffiti previously recorded from Piercebridge (Ward 2008 Chapter D9) are either on the underside of the base or on the external wall, most are just one or two letters, V or □ being the most common with three examples; one is the large part of a name, reading ]AVGVSTI[ (Ward 2008 fig. D9.6 no 45). These graffiti are usually taken to be marks of ownership. Often one or two simple letters, with M, V and X occurring most frequently, the simple one or two letter graffiti may be literate abbreviations or perhaps even evidence of illiteracy. The two examples are both on vessels from eastern Gaul but are quite different. One is of two letters, the other a name or part of a name (or longer graffito). The two letter example is on what amounts to half a Dr 36, there are two joining sherds, it should be noted that the break is not recent, but obviously it is not possible to tell if the pot was deposited in one or two pieces. This vessel is of third-century date (cf Stamp No 17). The graffito is on the smaller sherd at the base of the wall. The graffito on the second example, a sherd from a Dr 37, is in a similar position along the curving base of the wall. The bowl, a Lavoye product, is of late second-century date, and is very abraded. Both are open forms and it would have been very easy to inscribe the graffiti whilst the pots were complete. An example from Brougham *vicus* has the owner's name inside the upper wall of a later-Antonine CG form 33 (M. Ward *pers. comm.*).

- 10) Approximately half of a shallow Dr 36 dish in a Rheinzabern fabric (SAMRZ) with some black staining and 'tar-like' deposits on much of the edge and rim. The foot-ring is worn and has no slip remaining suggesting prolonged use. The form is not commonly stamped, but this vessel bears the stamp of Verus vi. The trailed barbotine decoration around the rim is unusual consisting of a repeating pattern of a long, narrow leaf with three diagonal lines behind it instead of the usual tendril. There are two letters of post firing graffiti scratched near the edge of the dish either XV or □X. There is a slightly less convincing vertical line which cuts across the arm of the V next to the X ID258 AD210-50.
- 11) Very worn body sherd from a Dr 37 decorated in the style of Tocca of Lavoye (SAMPLA). The sherd is blackened all over, but is apparently not burnt. The sherd is approximately rectangular and has a graffito of at least five letters scratched into it internally. It seems that the graffito was made before the vessel was broken as the final S cuts the edge of the sherd and follows the curve of pot at the edge of the base rather than following the shape of the sherd. I read the graffito as CARTVS with the R and T ligatured, however, the sherd has many small scratch marks, although none as deep as the lettering ( possibly from cleaning over the letters) and the line which extends left and right across the top of the R and joins the top of the V may not be deliberate. Again, it should be noted that graffiti inside vessels is very uncommon. The vessel is of late Antonine date. ID272
- 12) Post-firing graffito X on the underside of the base of a Dr 33 cup with stamped by the potter Osbimanus. This is a common type of graffito and is usually interpreted as a mark of ownership. A.D. 155-185 ID 73

## Repair and re-use

The level of repair, c.1.5 percent of all sherds, is about average, possibly a little lower than is usually found. As noted by Margaret Ward (1993, 19) all the repaired vessels here were produced after c. A.D. 150/160, although it should be noted that most of the assemblage was produced after the middle of the second century. Five of the six examples are from Rheinzabern which is not the most common source recorded in this collection. The greatest number of repaired vessels usually corresponds with the period of greatest samian use, but here it is possible that there might be a case to argue repair was about extending the currency of samian at a time when imports were declining. Both drilled holes and cut/sawn X- slots were recorded. Only open, bowl-like forms were repaired, presumably because these were the

easiest to repair. It always seems odd that mortaria are mended as one would assume that grinding could be vigorous and a repaired vessel might not last for long. Repaired coarse-ware and samian mortaria are known from elsewhere, and samian mortaria from Piercebridge (Ward 1993, 19). The phenomenon is not limited to ceramic mortaria, repairs to stone examples have also been recorded, although not from this site (Mills, fig 82,16). It would appear that repaired mortaria were completely acceptable.

Record ID	Fabric	Form	Repair type
105	SAMCG	Dr 31R	Cut slots
254	SAMRZ	Dr 31	Drilled hole
265	SAMRZ	Dr 37	Drilled hole
37	SAMRZ	Dr 45	Cut slots
257	SAMRZ	Lud Sb	Cut slots
365	SAMRZ	Dr 37	Cut slots

Table 3: Evidence for repair

## Altered vessels

A high proportion of the vessels recovered from the excavations at Piercebridge were either altered or re-shaped after a major breakage. The numbers were high enough that it was suggested that alterations were being done locally as a craft industry (Ward 2005, 182). However, few examples from the river seem to have been altered in any way.

1. Rheinzabern (SAMRZ) closed vessel base, probably form Dr 54. Base only, wall sherds appear to have been trimmed off; foot trimmed off, but asymmetrically. One half is trimmed and smoothed to the circle that defined the junction of the foot-ring and the base, the other side is trimmed to a point which is slightly burnt. The finger-rilled inside surface is battered and worn/abraded as if used upside down whilst the slip of the underside of the base is in really good condition as if it has been 'used' this way up. It is an odd piece, not quite a disc, not quite the usual trimmed down base which may have been re-used as a small dish. ID 273
2. Body sherd from a Trier (SAMTR) mortaria seems trimmed, chipped around close to foot, extant foot-ring is worn, and there is slip worn around underside although not all round. This wear seems (in the right light!) to be a series of circular wear patches although the remaining grits are not heavily worn. This seems to be a cut down vessel which has been used for focused grinding. ID42
3. Drag 33 cup base with internal stamp of Attilus v (SAMCG). Looks as if the wall sherds have been broken off possibly for re-use. There is a little wear in a limited arc of the base of the foot-ring on underside. ID71
4. Flanged bowl sherd (SAMCG) the flange had been cut down and smoothed as if to extend the life of a vessel with a broken flange. ID20
5. A Dr 33 cup (SAMCG) stamped by Marcus v; battered, but with the appearance that the base has been shaped by the removal of all of the wall, and also the removal of

foot-ring. Although the sherd is battered the foot-ring appears to be worn smoothed, and c.1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the edge of the base is also very worn/smoothed. There are of signs of wear under the base within the foot-ring. ID 78

## Discussion

In terms of the sources and proportions from the main kiln sites, date range and range of forms present, the assemblage of samian retrieved from the River Tees has many attributes which suggest it is similar to the collections of samian retrieved from excavations throughout Piercebridge (Ward 2006 and 2008).

The little south Gaulish samian recovered during the excavations at Piercebridge suggests a Flavian date for the earliest activity, but quantities in terms of the maximum number of vessels identified (MVN) are never more than 15 percent of any excavated group. Continuing occupation accounts for the finds from Les Martres-de-Veyre, the early second-century products from Lezoux and the small centres in eastern Gaul such as La Madeleine and Heiligenberg; these occur at a low level across many of the excavated groups. The river finds yielded no samian from Martres-de-Veyre or early eastern Gaulish wares, and vessels from Lezoux which pre-date c. A.D. 160 account for perhaps as little as 10 percent of the whole. As has been widely observed across Piercebridge, central Gaulish vessels dominate and make up more than 80 percent of sixteen out of the 22 excavated collections, and for a similar number of groups 12-18 percent of vessels were from eastern Gaul. The MVN for the river material of 81 percent for central Gaul and 18.5 percent for eastern Gaul places this group well within the range for the excavated samian. The figures when measured in rim EVEs are slightly different: 75 percent and 22 percent from central and eastern Gaul respectively, but still within this range. The enhanced value for the eastern Gaulish wares no doubt reflects that these vessels are less broken. The mean sherd weight for material from eastern Gaul is 10g heavier than for the central Gaulish sherds. The majority of the samian, if not all of it, pre-dates the establishment of the fort in the mid-third century. There are a few late Trier vessels, notably those with parallels in the Massenfund (Huld-Zetsche, 1971). These include the form 8b dish from the river and the possible Gose 146 bowls from the excavations of the west-east road and the Courtyard building which could be contemporary with the foundation of the fort. However, it is not necessarily the case that the third-century Rheinabern vessels, many of which are beaker and/or flagon forms, have military connections.

The range of forms from the river and from the excavations are broadly similar. Most easily measurable are the mould-decorated vessels. The range of MVN from the excavations is 8-30 percent of the total vessels. At 24 percent the material from the river is at the higher end of this range. In rim EVEs the percentage of decorated forms falls to 11 percent. This disparity is most marked for decorated forms because decorated forms are the easiest to identify from small body sherds and thus MVN will always inflate the number of decorated vessels identified. The potters represented are comparable; most of the late potters identified from excavated material are represented in the collection from the river. However, products attributed to Servus iv are not, despite the prevalence of his vessels throughout the excavations at Piercebridge. Mortaria seem to be unusually common finds at Piercebridge, Margaret Ward reports MVN for mortaria as high as 8, 9 and 13 percent and a large number of mortarium spouts are illustrated in the reports, eight from central, and five from eastern Gaul. The river finds of gritted mortaria account for 7 percent MVN. This is similarly a very high percentage, but interestingly no spouts were recovered from the river.

When considered by vessel function class the types of vessel recovered from the river display an unusual bias towards plain bowls and mortaria, and a dearth of cup and dish forms. The data from the river deposits can be compared with data gathered by Steven Willis (2005) in his wide-ranging study (Fig 2). Willis compared assemblages from different site types using the percentages of different vessel classes (counted by maximum vessel number MVN). When the data for our material is added to a graphic depiction of these site types it appears distinctly different. Recent excavations in Worcester (Mills in prep.) yielded samian deposited perhaps as late as the fourth century in disused quarry pits. Much of the samian was plain wares dating to the late second or early third century AD and these deposits contained a markedly high proportion of plain bowls and mortaria, but few cups. It is possible that certain late assemblages are dominated by these forms. If this is the case the vessel function profile for the river finds may not be unusual for the date.

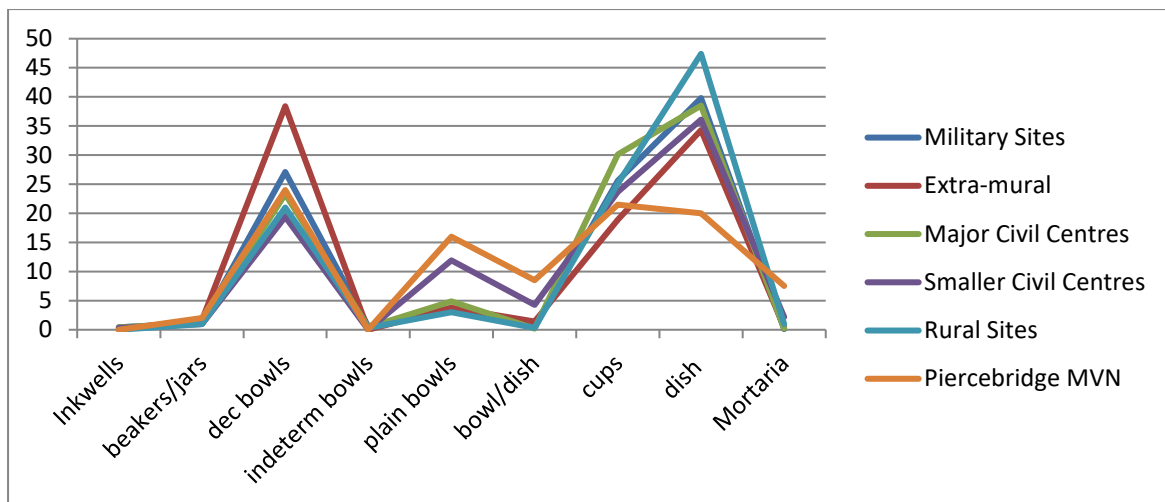


Figure 2: Samian expressed as percentages by vessel function class from the River Tees (yellow) compared with the average data from Willis' site types (2005)

Uncommon forms are always of interest and Piercebridge has a good selection. Many of the forms less commonly found are closed forms: inkwells, jars, vases and flagons. These are more difficult to make than open forms, especially where there is incised decoration (Bird 1993, 4). They are also often quite finely potted and must have been quite fragile. The difficulty inherent in their manufacture would have meant that they were more expensive than most samian vessels. It has been suggested that certain of these forms, notably flagons, but also jars and beakers of Dragendorff forms 52, 53 and 54 are selected for votive and ritual uses/deposition (Bird 2013, 329-30). The interesting thing about Piercebridge is that the excavations have produced several flagons and beakers from eastern Gaul including a very rare painted beaker; inkwell fragments were recovered from the bath-house and the outer ditch, and sherds from very rare so-called 'feeding cups' come from the courtyard building and the inner fort ditch.; all apparently discarded with other domestic refuse. Were it not for these finds, the discovery of the lower part of a disc-mouthed flagon in the river could be used to indicate votive deposition. Votive deposits in 'watery' contexts are summarised by Joanna Bird (2013, 330) where she cites a pair of similar disc-mouthed flagons recovered from a well at Oakridge, near Basingstoke. Other examples are known from graves including a central Gaulish vessel in a grave at Keston, Kent (Bird 1987, pl.147, A/10) In addition fragments from four jar or beaker forms from eastern Gaul were recovered from the river, all finding parallels within the excavated material. It is of course difficult to identify vessels with a votive significance from deposits which may also contain domestic rubbish, and given the quantity of samian recovered from the River Tees at Piercebridge it seems unlikely that it was all deliberately placed in or

near the water as votive offerings. The similarities between the samian from the river and that from the excavations in and around the fort including as it does repaired and re-used vessels and generally a comparable range of vessels and fabrics leads to a conclusion that the river collection is a late assemblage typical of the material deposited across the local area, ie. in large part a domestic assemblage. Other evidence which could indicate a votive element to an assemblage would be the apparent selection of certain classes of vessel; the holing of vessels, often described as evidence of 'ritual killing', or selection of decorated vessels with might be linked to common themes such as fertility or the underworld. There does not appear to be any specific focus to suggest that the decorated material illustrates other than the mixed range of themes commonly depicted and found on all types of site.

There are two examples of post-firing graffiti on the interior of vessels (see above and Fig 00). It is very rare for graffiti to be found internally which leads to the question: 'Does an unusual positioning for graffiti indicate that are these votive vessels?' As with all archaeological interpretation context is all, however, simply because these sherds were recovered from the river should not lead to an automatic assumption that they were deposited ritually, although it is of course a possibility. The CARVS sherd seems to have been broken after the letters were inscribed, although it is not possible to say whether the sherd was deliberately broken around the graffiti. It could be argued that the AVGVSTI sherd from Tofts Field 1974, which similarly extends across the whole sherd, may also have been broken around the lettering, that example, however, was on the exterior of the vessel. The Dr 36 with just a two letter internal graffiti has different characteristics. About 50 percent of the vessel was recovered, although in two pieces. As noted above it is not possible to know whether it entered the river in two pieces or as a large sherd, and it may be co-incidental that the graffiti is on the smaller sherd.

Sherd size needs to be considered further. As mentioned above it seems that the action of the river has not caused much damage to the samian and we might assume that the sherd size is much the same as when the material was deposited. There were no complete vessels recovered, only eight for which the profile is extant (see Table 4), one with more than 50 percent of the vessel rim, and a further six with >50 percent of the vessel base, one of these [ID 78] has had the foot-ring removed, perhaps for re-use. Fragments of vessels of this size are not uncommon in domestic rubbish

deposits and several vessels with an extant profile were noted from Peircebridge excavations. Complete vessels are uncommon and might reasonably be thought to be ritually deposited, especially in the case of the river finds; it should also be noted that 'in a religious context a broken but still substantial fragment could stand for the whole' (Bird 2012, 329).

ID	fabric	form	no	wt	Rim EVE	Base EVE	Stamp	Edate	Ldate
Full vessel profile:									
258	SAMRZ	5DR36	2	300	51	60	VERVSFEC	210	260
68	SAMCG	6DR33	2	45	50	35	JM	120	200
2	SAMCG	6WA80	1	49	45	40	VENERND	155	185
69	SAMCG	6DR33	1	52	32	100	IIERIIII	170	200
7	SAMCG	6O&PLV13	1	160	28	72	ATILIANVS + rosette	170	200
67	SAMCG	6DR33	1	49	18	45	JNI	120	200
4	SAMCG	5WA79R	1	130	8	13		160	200
6	SAMCG	5WA79	1	93		42		180	200+
Other sherds with > 50% of the rim surviving:									
12	SAMCG	5DR35/36	1	133	60			160	200
Other sherds with > 50% of the base surviving:									
11	SAMCG	3 flagon	4	183		50		160	200
74	SAMCG	6DR33	1	17		50	SS	160	175
72	SAMCG	6DR33	1	28		52	JRNNI	160	200
320	SAMCG	4DR37	1	211		100			
71	SAMCG	6DR33	1	34		100	ATTILLI	160	200
78	SAMCG	6DR33	1	30		100	[ ]	160	210

Table 4: Summary of vessels with extant profiles and/or >50% of rim or base EVE

## Conclusion

The samian recovered from the river can be seen to be similar to that recovered from excavations at Piercebridge and as such interpreted as domestic refuse. Given the context of the river bed the archaeological challenge is to determine whether any of the pottery recovered from the river bed entered the river as votive offerings. The clues available are features of the assemblage which can be used to indicate ritual deposition; these might include sherd size, suitability of the samian in terms of form or decoration or evidence of alteration or embellishment which might have rendered a vessel suitable for the purpose. Much of the assemblage is apparently ordinary, but the presence of part of a disc-mouthed flagon and two



graffiti in an unusual position, ie inside the vessels could indicate that elements of this collection might have had ritual significance.

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**Abbreviations:**

Dr Dragendorff form series

Lud Ludowici form series

O&P Oswald and Price 1920

S&S Stanfield and Simpson 1990

Rogers – motif in Rogers 1974

RF – motif in Ricken-Fischer 1963

O. – figure type in Oswald 1936/7