

NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURY ANTIQUITIES DEALERS AND ARRETINE WARE FROM LONDON

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One of the problems which bedevils research on museum collections is the objects, usually early acquisitions in the history of the museum, whose unusual nature or provenance suggest that they may be modern 'imports' from elsewhere in Britain or abroad. This note discusses a group of such objects from London whose significance lies less in their own intrinsic interest than in the implications they have for the finds of Arretine ware from London and the evidence for early Roman activity in the City¹. The writer's attention was originally drawn to a complete samian plate (Walters form 79) stamped ATILIANIM, whose underside was coated in a shiny substance, subsequently identified as cellulose². A label recorded the object as being a 19th-century find from Lombard Street, but the removal of the surface coating showed the base had lost its slip in the manner typical of the sand-scoured vessels recovered from the wreck on Pudding Pan Rock, Kent, and the stamp is one of the commonest recorded from there. The evidence suggests that after the plate had been obtained, an attempt was made to restore the lost surface on the underside before giving it a false provenance in the City of London. Attention has recently been drawn to another similar 'import'³, in this case a *terra-cotta* mould for a cupid appliqué figure, which originated from Xanten, Germany. Formerly part of the Houben Collection it was auctioned in 1860 and subsequently became incorporated in the Guildhall Museum collection. The Museum of London also contains an alabastron in the form of a lion⁴, from the same source, which had 'acquired' a provenance and was recorded as coming from 'Lombard St. 1866'. In addition to these three items, the following vessels may be noted as evidence of the activities of dealers in antiquities during the second half of the 19th and the first decades of the 20th centuries⁵.

- (i) Museum of London Acc. No. A16047. Complete 5th-century B.C. Greek mortarium⁶. Bought by the London Museum in 1915; 'Gracechurch St.'
- (ii) Ashmolean Museum Acc. No. 58-1885. Base of 'Megarian ware' type bowl with basal monogram⁷. Although generally dated from the 3rd-1st centuries B.C., examples in Southern France may last into the early years of the 1st century A.D.; 'Lombard St.'
- (iii) Museum of London Acc. No. A1692. Complete beaker in fine buff fabric with concave everted rim and body decorated with three rows of applied 'thorns'. This vessel is of a type manufactured during the Augustan period in Central/Northern Italy and distributed as far as Southern France, where a similar beaker has been recently published from Vaugrenier from an Augustan layer post-dating 10 B.C.⁸. Bought by the London Museum in 1912 from the Hilton-Price Collection; 'Lombard St.'
- (iv) Museum of London Acc. No. A17190. Complete North African Red Slipware plate (Hayes form 3A)⁹. Bought in 1916; 'South Corner of Lombard St. and Gracechurch St. 1864'
- (v) Museum of London Acc. No. 29.94/1. Base of Eastern Mediterranean Sigillata with stamp MAPKOI¹⁰. Purchased *per* G. F. Lawrence in 1929 and recorded as from 'Leadenhall St. opposite Lloyd's New Building'.
- (vi) Museum of London Acc. No. 3170. Complete small bowl identified by Dr. J. W. Hayes as Eastern Sigillata B2 ware¹¹; 'Royal Exchange'.

- (vii) Museum of London Acc. No. 58.116. Complete 'Romano-Saxon' beaker. Bought at the auction of the Barrington Haynes Collection. Label reads 'Gracechurch St. Feb. 1936'.
 (viii) Museum of London Acc. No. 15147. Near complete 6th-century Coptic amphora¹²; 'Lombard St. 1840'.

Viewed in isolation some of these vessels could be regarded as genuine London finds, but viewed as a group they would appear to be foreign material being passed off by dealers as genuine London finds in order to enhance their value¹³. The pieces are usually complete or have interesting features such as stamps. In addition most have provenances in or close to the Lombard St./Leadenhall St. area. Although complete vessels are occasionally found on Roman urban excavations in rubbish pits or as votive foundation deposits *their discovery is normally restricted to burials, which by law were located outside a town's boundaries*. Although early cremations and child burials can be exceptions to this rule it is unlikely that they would occur in any significant numbers in an area of known primary occupation.

Of more immediate interest to the archaeology of London is the connection between these vessels and the Arretine ware claimed to have been found in London. Most of this material was drawn together by Oswald and Pryce in their important paper on the early samian ware from London, where they argued that the early date of the material must indicate occupation in London prior to the Roman invasion of A.D. 43¹⁴.

Wheeler, however, was much more cautious and thought the material was in use after the conquest, a view more recently followed by Merrifield¹⁵. Hull in 1961 suggested that London was a distribution point for Arretine and Comfort argued that at London 'pre-conquest penetration lies beyond argument' although he subsequently revised his opinion and cast doubt on some of the provenances of Arretine ware from Britain¹⁶. Most recently Rodwell has also questioned the authenticity of some of the pieces but sees others as army 'baggage imports'¹⁷. Oswald and Pryce illustrated fifteen pieces from London (*for Nos. 1-15 see their Fig. 1 for details*), ten in the British Museum¹⁸ and five now in the Museum of London. They also discussed two other pieces (here numbered in their series):

16. Cambridge Museum (Oswald and Pryce, text-fig. 1). Complete cup stamped Zoilus *in planta pedis*. Oxé-Comfort corpus No. 181/155¹⁹; 'Leadenhall St. 1882'.
 17. Stamp of Hilarus, now lost, claimed to have been found in London during the 1830s²⁰.

The Museum of London contains four further pieces:

18. Museum of London Acc. No. 3276. Complete dish stamped S·M·F; 'Lombard St. 1864'²¹.
 19. Museum of London Acc. No. SR.XI.9 41. Complete cup with unreadable stamp *in planta pedis*. Accession details unknown.
 20. Museum of London Acc. No. 23074. Base stamped OCT.PRO *in planta pedis*. Oxé-Comfort No. 1162 otherwise only known from Italy and Greece. Presented to the museum; 'City'.
 21. Museum of London. No number. Base stamped L.OCTAVI *in planta pedis*. Oxé-Comfort No. 1160 otherwise only known from Rome and Elche. Presumed to be from London.

Of the London and Cambridge Museum pieces it is significant that six of the ten vessels are complete²². Moreover Nos. 2 and 18 are both from 'Lombard St. 1864', No. 16 from 'Leadenhall St. 1882' and No. 1 from 'Leadenhall Market'²³ while no details survive of No. 19. The small cup (No. 3) from 'London Bridge Station, 1841' has the only London

stamp paralleled elsewhere in Britain, with examples at Silchester, Fishbourne and *Camulodunum*, but even this piece is not above suspicion. The vessel was originally in the collection of W. Chaffers, some of which was acquired by the British Museum in 1855 including a fake samian mould²⁴. Another group of objects passed to the Museum of Practical Geology whose catalogue²⁵ shows that Chaffers had samian from Rhineland sites, a complete Megarian ware bowl and much material claimed to be from London and Southwark. The latter includes 5th/4th-century B.C. Greek lamps, Mediterranean pottery²⁶ and three red *terra-cotta* figurines of the type brought back in large quantities from the Mediterranean in the 19th century. Two are 'provenanced' in the City, but the third, a complete figure of a boy on a horse, is recorded as 'Borough 1840' and this must cast doubt on the validity of other early finds from Southwark. Of the four sherds No. 6 was bought in 1913 from the Hilton-Price Collection which as seen above contained suspect material and the two stamps (Nos. 20 and 21) are only paralleled in Italy, Spain and Greece. Lastly, No. 7 with its interesting appliqué decoration, was bought in 1916 probably *per* G. F. Lawrence and claimed to be from Tooley St., Southwark, the source of many early London Museum acquisitions²⁷.

Of the ten pieces in the British Museum, No. 13 has recently been shown to be part of a Central Gaulish mortarium²⁸. While Oswald and Pryce recorded that none of the others had exact provenances, they did not mention that eight of them were acquired in two groups from the same man, William Edwards. Nos. 8 and 11 were bought in 1837 with other material which *included* finds from Southwark, while Nos. 4, 5, 10, 12, 14 and 15 were bought in 1855 in a group of finds claimed to be from London but which also included the rim of a North African Red Slipware plate with an appliqué dolphin²⁹. No. 9 was published in 1849 and was then in a private collection and claimed to be from London³⁰.

It is hoped that this note has indicated that the Arretine ware from London was mostly acquired in circumstances which must cast serious doubts on the authenticity of the London provenances and clearly dealers were not adverse to claiming that vessels were from London if it increased their value. The Arretine ware could have easily been obtained in the Mediterranean area and certainly by the mid 19th century the demand for objects was so great that fake poinçons of Libertus were being manufactured, examples of which passed into the collections of both the British Museum and the Musée des Antiquités Nationales³¹. This activity was supplemented by the manufacture of copies of genuine moulds from the samian kilns at Rheinzabern by Kaufmann at Speyer in the same period, two examples of which came to the Guildhall Museum before 1908³².

Of more importance is the claimed relationship between Arretine ware and the early-Roman occupation in London. Rodwell placed London in a small group of sites with *Camulodunum*, Fishbourne, *Margidunum* and Leicester where Arretine ware appeared to be in use in the post-conquest period rather than surviving from earlier occupation³³. Todd, however, has now indicated possible pre-Roman occupation at Leicester and Dr. Grace Simpson has kindly informed the writer that the sherd from *Margidunum* is an early 2nd-century A.D. Dr. 37 by the Potter X-2 of Les Martres-de-Veyre³⁴. In London recent work in the City and particularly in Southwark has cast doubt on the assumption that Roman London was founded as a military base in the invasion period, indeed in Southwark occupation does not seem to begin until *c.* A.D. 50-55³⁵. If this is correct the Arretine ware is even more anomalous when other early sites such as Richborough have

produced none. Whatever the reasons for the appearance of Arretine ware in Claudian levels at Fishbourne and *Camulodunum* it is clear that the existing London material should be excluded from any discussion of this problem³⁶ or used as evidence of putative early military occupation in the City, until properly stratified pieces are excavated. Obviously future work in London and Southwark may produce such pieces but excavations in *this* century have singularly failed to do so.

I would like to thank Hugh Chapman for all his assistance during the preparation of this note and for his valuable comments on it.

NOTES

1. Pending the results of the survey by Mr. G. B. Dannell and Dr. D. Williams on all the Arretine ware from Britain no attempt has been made to distinguish between Italian and 'provincial' Arretine ware.
2. Museum of London Acc. 34.285/1, bought from a private collection.
3. See H. Chapman 'Evidence for a Roman Cavalry Helmet from London' in *Collectanea Londiniensia*, London Middlesex Archaeol. Soc. Special Paper No. 2 (1978) 179, n. 16. The mould is published in J.M.C. Toynbee *Art in Roman Britain under the Romans* (Oxford 1964) 43 and Pl. 90, c and d.
4. Museum of London Acc. No. 2700; *Guildhall Museum Catalogue* (London 1908) Pl. 15, 10.
5. This list is not exhaustive e.g. see D. Bailey 'A so-called Greek Rhyton from London' *Antiquity* 33 (1959) 218-219. Lynn Pitts in her recent corpus of Roman bronze figurines has suggested that some of the London pieces are modern introductions, see L. F. Pitts *Roman Bronze Figurines of the Catuvellauni and Trinovantes* B.A.R. No. 60 (Oxford 1979) 117-120. Judging by their early accession dates the present writer would suggest that many more of the bronzes are likely to fall within this category.
6. Information from Mrs. K. Hartley.
7. I am indebted to Dr. K. T. Greene for the information on this piece.
8. See A. Olivier and G. Rogers 'Le Monument de Vaugrenier' *Revue Archéologique de Narbonnaise* 11 (1978) Fig. 46, 3.
9. North African wares are known from Britain, see J. Bird 'African Red Slipware in Roman Britain' in J. Dore and K. T. Greene (eds.) *Roman Pottery Studies in Britain and Beyond* B.A.R. Supplementary Series No. 30 (Oxford 1977) 269-277, but note the complete dish from Colchester thought to be a possible post-Roman introduction and also the complete plate (Museum of London Acc. No. 20565) with its provenance recorded as 'Pan Rock, Whitstable, 1865', which is possibly false.
10. See *London in Roman Times* London Museum Catalogue No. 3 (London 1930) Fig. 43, 4. Mr. P. Arthur has kindly informed the writer that this is the most widely spread stamp of its type with examples as far west as Aquileia.
11. See *G. M. Catalogue* Pl. 55, 1 and 44, 2 and F. Oswald and T. D. Pryce *Introduction to the Study of Terra Sigillata* (London 1920) Pl. 54, Fig. 6. The medusa head on the basal interior has subsequently been shown to have been stuck on, covering a rosette stamp, and has nothing to do with the vessel.
12. Information from Dr. D. Peacock who has kindly pointed out that another example from Wiltshire can be shown to be a recent importation.
13. The famous London antiquary, Thomas Layton, was acquiring North Italian fine wares, North African Red Slipware, Eastern Mediterranean Sigillata and significantly Arretine ware with *in planta pedis* stamps for his collection in the mid 19th century but whether from dealers in London or abroad is uncertain. The early and mid 19th century saw a mania for filling houses with curios of all sorts, see D. E. Allen *The Naturalist in Britain — A Social History* (London 1976) 94-121 and *The Victorian Fern Craze* (London 1969).
14. F. Oswald and T. D. Pryce 'Roman London: Its initial occupation evidenced by early types of Terra Sigillata' *Archaeologia* 78 (1928) 73-110.
15. See *Royal Commission on Historic Monuments: London Vol. III Roman London* (London 1928) 24-27 and R. Merrifield *The Roman City of London* (London 1965) 30-32.
16. See M. R. Hull 'The Red-Glazed Pottery found at Bagendon' in E. M. Clifford *Bagendon, A Belgic Oppidum* (Cambridge 1961) 202-211; H. Comfort 'An Italian Sigillata Crater in Britain' in M. Renard (ed.) 'Hommages à Albert Grenier' *Collection Latomus* 58 (1962) 448-456 and H. Comfort 'Lake Nemi and London: Two Retractions' *Rei Cretariae Romanae Fautorum* 16 (1976) 158-159.
17. W. Rodwell 'Coinage, Oppida and the rise of Belgic Power in South-Eastern Britain' in B. Cunliffe and T. Rowley *Oppida in Barbarian Europe* B.A.R. Supplementary Series No. 11 (Oxford 1976) 181-367.
18. They did not include six other pieces, including two complete vessels from the Slade Bequest which have no details about their source. I would like to thank Miss C. Johns for all her assistance in examining the London material and for her comments on it. Four dubious vessels in the Horniman Museum were also excluded.
19. A. Oxé and H. Comfort *Corpus Vasorum Arretinorum: a catalogue of the signatures, shapes and chronology of Italian sigillata* *Antiquitas*, Reihe 3: Abhandlungen zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte, zur klassischen und provincial-römischen Archäologie 4 (Bonn 1968).
20. See C. R. Smith 'Observations on the Roman remains found in various parts of London in the years 1834, 1835 and 1836' *Archaeologia* 27 (1838) 152. There is no drawing of the stamp.
21. *G. M. Catalogue* Pl. 45, 13. H. B. Walters *Catalogue of the Roman Pottery in the British Museum* (London 1908) 59 records the same stamp on a dish from Torre Annunziata given to the Museum in 1856.
22. Another complete Arretine ware dish was bought from auction in 1929 by the British Museum and provenanced as 'Basinghall St.', see T. D. Pryce 'Arretine ware from the City' *Antiq. J.* 10 (1930) 55.
23. Museum of London Acc. No. A14403. Bought by the London Museum in 1914 (ex Mayhew Collection?). The stamp is Oxé-Comfort Corpus No. 154/9 and is probably to be expanded to (Cn. Ateius) Amar(anthus). Apart from finds at Cologne, Lyon and Cherchel, the work of this potter is restricted to Italy, Spain and Sicily, see H. Comfort 'Late Ateius Signatures' *Rei Cretariae Romanae Fautorum* 8 (1966) 5-25.

24. Walters *op. cit.* in note 21, Pl. 13.
25. H. de la Beche and T. Reeks *Catalogue of Specimens Illustrative of the composition and manufacture of British Pottery and Porcelain* (London 1855). This material subsequently passed to Bethnal Green Museum and is presently on loan to the Museum of London.
26. With provenances such as 'Lad Lane 1842', 'Queen St. 1842', 'Moorgate 1835', 'Cannon St.', 'During the digging of the foundations of London Bridge' etc.
27. In particular the famous complete flagon with the *LONDINI AD FANUM ISIDIS* graffito bought in 1912 per G. F. Lawrence. Doubt has sometimes been cast on the graffito as the flagon would normally be dated before c. A.D. 75, which would be an extremely early, although not impossible, date for the appearance of Isis worship in London. Whether the graffito is genuine or not the flagon is unlikely to have come from Tooley St. and is probably derived from a burial elsewhere in Southwark or the City.
28. See C. Johns 'A Samian sherd from New St., London' *British Museum Quarterly* 37 (1973) 151-154.
29. Walters *op. cit.* in note 21, Fig. 232.
30. C. R. Smith 'The Red Glazed Pottery of the Romans found in this Country and on the Continent' *J. Brit. Archaeol. Assoc.* 4 (1849) 20.
31. C. Bémont and G. B. Rogers 'Quelques poinçons-matrices signés du nom de Libertus et leurs relations avec les décors de l'atelier' *Antiquités Nationales* 9 (1978) 66-70. Further evidence of this 'trade' is shown by five complete Arretine ware vessels from a country house in the south-west of England, see E. J. W. Hildyard 'A Group of Arretine Ware' *Antiq. J.* 31 (1951) 195-197.
32. See G. Simpson 'Decorated Terra Sigillata at Montans (Tarn) from the manuscript of Elie Rossignol at Albi' *Britannia* 7 (1976) 244-273, and G. M. *Catalogue* Pl. 38, 4.
33. Rodwell *op. cit.* in note 17.
34. M. Todd *The Coritani* (London 1973) 54. The 'Hanley Museum' Crater published by Comfort must be regarded with great suspicion since it lacks any details about its acquisition, see Comfort *op. cit.* in note 16, 452. The *Margidunum* sherd will be republished shortly.
35. See the discussion in *Southwark Excavations 1972-74* London Middlesex Archaeol. Soc./Surrey Archaeol. Soc. Special Paper No. 1 (London 1978) and in particular M. J. Hammerson 'The Coins', 587-600.
36. For a discussion of this problem see Rodwell *op. cit.* in note 17, 305-307 and G. B. Dannell 'The Samian Ware from Bagendon' in Dore and Green (eds.) *op. cit.* in note 9, 229-234.