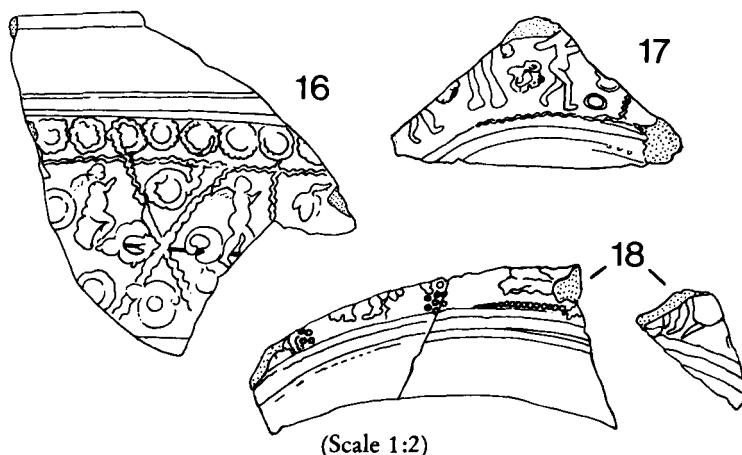


THREE VESSELS BY THE ALDGATE-PULBOROUGH POTTER FROM LONDON

Geoff Marsh

The Aldate-Pulborough potter, as the first known maker of samian in Britain is of considerable interest and this note discusses three unpublished pieces of his work in the Museum of London. All three vessels are characterised by the deep orange-red fabric and dull orange slip associated with this potter's work. The decoration is of low standard and much of the detail is badly smudged. Unfortunately the pieces have no detailed provenances but almost certainly came from the area of the Roman city.

(The pieces are numbered in series with earlier published finds)¹



16. Dr. 30 (Museum of London 12560G). All the decorative details occur on a Dr. 30 from Chichester² which has a similar general design. The 22 beaded rosette (Webster type g) is used as an ovolo replacement and also as a space filler in the main design. Below a wavy-line border the decoration is divided into panels. To the left two wavy lines, one overrunning the 'ovolo', form a rough cross with two cupids (0.404 var.) and rosettes filling up the spaces. The panel to the right contains the tip ? of a baluster entwined with ivy leaves (D.1092). In the top left corner of the sherd is a fragment of a motif, possibly an astragalus. An unusual feature of the vessel is a guide line about half way down the design. Such a line, which occurs on the work of potters such as Libertus and Butrio, has not previously been recorded on the Aldgate-Pulborough potter's work.
17. Dr. 37 (Museum of London 12562 G). Part of a panel design with wavy line borders. The panel contains the feet of a small figure (Webster type C) and the cupid (0.404 var.) repeated twice. A small circle and possibly a cordate leaf (Webster types e and o) are used as space fillers. The basal border has been partly removed during turning.
18. Dr. 37 (Museum of London 12561L; ex Stanfield Collection). Four sherds give the complete base and a small portion of the decoration. A further sherd from the rim (not illustrated) shows a small fragment of a double-bordered ovolo with a beaded tongue, presumably the potter's ovolo A. The decoration is unique in having fine beaded borders rather than wavy lines and seven beaded rosettes at the junctions. Such decoration again emphasises the stylistic connections between the Aldgate-Pulborough potter and

those working at Les Martres-de-Veyre and Lezoux in the Hadrianic period. In the panel to the right are the front paws of a leopard (O.1564) previously recorded on the potter's work. The panel to the left appears to have had beaded lines making a cross design with an unidentifiable motif below, perhaps an acanthus leaf. A further sherd possibly shows the grass tuft (Rogers L.19) used by Potter X-13 and Sacer/Attianus. Most of the basal border has been removed by prominent turning grooves.

The designs of the three London sherds tends to confirm Webster's proposed date of c. A.D. 120-150 for the working life of the Aldgate-Pulborough potter but the problem of the location of his kiln remains. Brian Hartley has recently suggested that the Aldgate 'waster' might rather be a vessel distorted in the 2nd London fire of c. A.D. 125,³ and although five vessels are now recorded from London⁴ the main weight of finds still remains in Sussex. In an attempt to produce more certain evidence for the source of his work Dr. David Williams kindly thin-sectioned vessel No. 17 and his results are appended below.

The results are unfortunately inconclusive and even the sherds attributed to the Aldgate-Pulborough potter fail to match up exactly. Although this might be due to variation in the source of the clay used it is quite conceivable that the potter worked at more than one site and may have produced other types of pottery apart from samian. This might explain the discovery of a sherd at Sea Mills, near Bristol, as long distance trade of such low quality products seems unlikely. I would like to thank Pat Rennie for kindly drawing the sherds.

PETROLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Dr. D. F. Williams

The samian sherd No. 2 was thin-sectioned and studied under the petrological microscope as part of a programme of analysis of Arretine and samian pottery⁵. Preliminary results show that the majority of samples from Arretine and samian vessels contain only common inclusions such as quartz sand, mica and limestone. This range of inclusions is not particularly helpful in suggesting geological source areas, and by implication the likely production centres involved. However, a detailed textural analysis on sherds assigned to particular centres by name-stamp or stylistic features, does suggest that it may be possible to characterise their fabrics. The method entails an examination of the size, shape and frequency of the inclusions present in the clay, and is capable of allowing less distinctive sherds to be allocated to a production area by comparing material from known origins. This London sherd has been compared with samian thought to have been made in this country by the Aldgate-Pulborough potter, as well as with early 2nd-century material from Les Martres-de-Veyre and Lezoux.

Results

In thin section the sherd was found to contain a groundmass of subangular quartz grains under 0.05mm in size, with a scatter of larger grains, average size 0.10-0.20mm, set in an anisotropic matrix of fired clay. Also present were a few small siltstones and some flecks of mica.

This fabric proved to be different from a sample taken from a sherd from Southwark also thought to have been made by the Aldgate-Pulborough potter⁶. The Southwark sherd contains more frequent mica and well-sorted quartz grains, average size 0.05-0.10mm, as well as red iron ore grains and a little limestone. Both sherds were in turn different from two samples from Wiggonholt of the Aldgate-Pulborough potter⁷. These latter sherds contain frequent well-sorted quartz grains up to 0.10mm in size and some flecks of mica. In addition, none of the above samples appeared similar in thin section to sherds from Les Martres-de-Veyre

and Lezoux. The Les Martres samples tend to be of a much finer texture than the sherds from London and Wiggonholt, while those from Lezoux contain a significant amount of limestone. The exception to this was a sherd from Lezoux (Drusus II) with a slight pinkish-buff core in fresh fracture. In thin section this sample showed an isotropic matrix recalling material from Montans⁸.

Conclusions

The sherd sectioned does not appear sufficiently similar in fabric to the alleged British samian sherds from Southwark and Wiggonholt, or to material from Central Gaul, to suspect that it was made at the same centre as one of these vessels. However, at this stage it is not possible to say if the Museum of London sample was produced in Britain or not, only that it does not compare favourably with the above samples.

NOTES

1. For previous articles on this potter see G. Simpson 'The Aldgate Potter: A maker of Romano-British samian ware' *J. Roman Stud.* 42 (1952) 68-71. P. Webster 'More British samian ware by the Aldgate-Pulborough Potter' *Britannia* 6 (1975) 163-170 and J. Bennet 'A further vessel by the Aldgate-Pulborough Potter' *Britannia* 9 (1978) 393-394.
2. Simpson *op. cit.* in Note 1, No. 5.
3. See Footnote 30 in B. R. Hartley 'Some Wandering Potters' in J. Dore and K. T. Greene eds. *Roman Pottery Studies in Britain and Beyond* B.A.R. Supplementary Series No. 30 (Oxford, 1977) 251-259.
4. Or six if a recently published piece of British samian from Southwark is included see *Southwark Excavations 1972-74* London Middlesex Archaeol. Soc./Surrey Archaeol. Soc. No. 1 (1978) Fig. 143, No. 142. Although this piece is clearly of British manufacture it was found in a late 2nd-century pit which might suggest it is not by the Aldgate-Pulborough potter.
5. See D. F. Williams 'Petrological analysis of Arretine and early samian: a preliminary report' in P. Arthur and G. D. Marsh eds. *Early Fine Wares in Roman Britain* B.A.R. No. 57 (Oxford 1978) 5-12. I would like to thank Joanna Bird, Peter Webster and the Museum of London for supplying the samples from Southwark, Wiggonholt and London respectively.
6. See Note 4 above.
7. See Webster *op. cit.* in Note 1, Fig. 3, Nos. 14 and P.2.
8. See Williams *op. cit.* in Note 5, 7.